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ABSTRACT

Currently, Africa stands out as the world's poorest and most educationally deprived region. Where communities are empowered to identify their own needs and priorities, participate in decisions about resource allocation, and hold education providers accountable for ensuring that children receive a minimum acceptable standard of education, schooling is most likely to result in education. This is especially the case in Sub-Saharan Africa, where communities are usually rural, often dispersed, and have heterogeneous needs and priorities. Education is always a joint endeavor, and education development, at the speed and level needed, cannot take place in Africa except through education partnerships between governments and communities. At the same time, because of communities' heterogeneity, there is no blueprint for participation. Community financing should not be expected to substitute for the core public funding needed to create the basic conditions for learning in every school. Education partnerships are most likely to succeed where equitable funding is provided for all primary schools, and greater authority is devolved to the local level to allocate these resources and participate in school management. Effective decentralization to the community level requires fundamental changes in the cost structure of education, and changes in budget procedures that allow resources to flow rapidly and efficiently from the center to the school level. The World Bank has a critical role in assisting African country efforts to develop viable community-based approaches that safeguard equity, promote equality and efficiency, and fit coherently within wider governance structures. To perform this role, the Bank must broaden its project focus and place a greater emphasis on project participation, cost effectiveness, and replicability. (Contains a 7 boxes, 2 tables, and 104 references.) (BT)

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Community Support for Basic Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Patrick Watt

SO 034 855

Africa Region
The World Bank

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Foreword

As the report, *'Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?'* notes, while Africa has some of the world's strongest communities, service delivery tends to take place through functionally and physically remote government structures. Despite important reforms that have taken place in many African countries in recent years, this remains especially true of education, where communities often continue to be neglected as partners in development. Yet, there is growing evidence from a wide range of interventions, including those supported by the World Bank in Africa, as well as in other regions, that community involvement in the life of the school can have a dramatic impact on education access, retention, and quality. Therefore, in the context of the disappointing progress made in African education over the past decade, community-based approaches to education development have much to recommend them. This is particularly the case in Africa, where most communities are rural, dispersed, isolated by poor physical and communications infrastructure, and have heterogeneous needs and priorities. Bringing the school and community closer together can generate a sense of local ownership and enhance accountability, and ensure that content, scheduling, and educational requirements are accurately identified and adapted to local conditions than in conventional delivery systems. In the process, community support for education can play a central role in efforts to raise participation rates, especially among traditionally disadvantaged groups, including girls, and improve school retention and learning outcomes.

This paper provides a timely summary of the potential benefits and risks involved in expanding the role of Africa's communities in education development. The shared failure of governments and donors to meet the education goals established at Jomtien for the year 2000, and the commitment made at the World Education Forum in Dakar to intensify and accelerate efforts to achieve education development up to 2015, underscore the need for fresh approaches to Africa's educational challenges. As the review of programs in this paper demonstrates, the World Bank is currently involved in developing many community-based education projects and programs in the region. These range from familiar forms of support – such as community involvement in construction – to more active involvement in management, planning, and learning. Many of these interventions show considerable promise, and provide a solid foundation for future program development. At the same time, the paper argues that there is considerable scope for the Bank to enhance and expand its support for community approaches, by broadening program focus, and putting more emphasis on participation, cost-effectiveness, and replicability.

There is already a considerable body of experience of what works, and what does not, in community-based education in Africa. Communities can play a valuable role in education decision-making, and are often able and willing to add to public resources for the school. However, it is also clear that for community support to be successful, governments need to

meet the basic conditions for effective learning. Too often, community efforts have substituted, rather than added to, what has been provided though public funds. Equity objectives can be met only if these risks are recognized, and acted upon. Only then can Africa's communities take their rightful place as key stakeholders in the region's education development.

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Executive Summary

At the beginning of the 21st century, Africa stands out as the world's poorest and most educationally deprived region. These two critical challenges, of poverty reduction and educational development, are closely related: poverty is a barrier to educational development, and educational deprivation perpetuates and reinforces poverty. Breaking out of this vicious cycle and achieving rapid and sustained education development is unlikely to happen, especially in rural areas, unless communities are placed at the center of educational change – as partners, sources of knowledge, and as educators. Where communities are empowered to identify their own needs and priorities, participate in decisions about resource allocation, and hold education providers accountable for ensuring that children receive a minimum acceptable standard of education, schooling is most likely to result in education.

The case for community approaches in Africa

This is especially the case in Sub-Saharan Africa, where communities are usually rural, often dispersed, and have heterogeneous needs and priorities. The big distances and poor infrastructure found in most of Africa make traditional top-down social delivery systems slow and unwieldy. Yet in many countries, financial, planning and management decisions are confined to physically and functionally remote education ministries. The result is usually inefficient and inequitable resource allocation, and weak accountability and incentive structures, with few formal checks on what actually takes place at the school level. Where community involvement is advocated, it is often limited to hastily devised cost-sharing policies that view communities foremost as an alternative – or, at best, a supplementing – revenue source. There is considerable evidence that such practices tend to discriminate against children from the poorest households, and undermine equity objectives.

In contrast, community-based approaches to educational development have the potential to enhance ownership, accountability and efficiency. Enhancing the community's sense of ownership of a school makes it more likely that parents will support the aims of the school, and ensure that their children attend regularly and learn. Greater ownership can also build consensus for change, and increase accountability: teachers and other sector professionals are more likely to do their jobs well when communities take an active interest in what is happening in the classroom. Where this occurs, education quality, as well as access, is likely to improve. Giving communities a greater say in resource allocation, and holding schools accountable for the quality of teaching, may also reduce waste and enhance cost-effectiveness. Increased participation in education development can have other beneficial spin-offs. For example, it can contribute to democratization and social cohesion by involving a wider range of people in decision-making, and can help communities to develop new skills.

The disappointing educational performance of Africa over the past two decades has raised the profile of communities as educational partners, and recommended community-based approaches to governments, donors, and NGOs. During the initial post-independence period, Africa experienced rapid publicly

financed educational expansion. Yet, economic decline, public sector mismanagement, conflict, rapid population growth, and HIV-AIDS have made it increasingly difficult to sustain these advances. In many countries, unit expenditures have fallen, and enrollments, attendance, and literacy indicators have either stagnated or declined.

Against this background, many communities have become increasingly important financers of education, especially at the primary level. This support takes many forms, including official and unofficial fees and levies raised at different levels of the education system, fund-raising activities, in-kind contributions of labor and goods, involvement in school planning and management, and support for the instructional cycle. Communities have also become increasingly important service providers, especially in conflict and post-conflict settings, and in Africa's rapidly growing cities.

Although these examples of community self-initiative are a powerful testimony to the commitment of Africans to provide educational opportunities for their children, they raise a number of serious concerns. First, the enlarged community role in education in recent years has usually been a crisis response, rather than part of a deliberate strategy to improve education. As a result it has often substituted, rather than complemented, the "core" public funding required to ensure that minimum conditions for effective schools are in place. Although in some cases community support has enabled limited educational development to take place, and in the worst cases has slowed the rate of educational decline, it tends to be regressive and inefficient, and is not a sustainable basis for education financing over the long term.

Second, as the state has abdicated responsibility in key areas of education financing and delivery, the burden on many poor households has increased markedly while the quality of education has declined. This affects the ability and willingness of communities to support education, and threatening equity objectives.

Third, this trend has developed in the context of development challenges, including the HIV-AIDS pandemic, widespread conflict, and rapid urbanization. These challenges are placing enormous pressures on communities, and fraying much of the social fabric on which community organization depends. There is a risk of unrealistic demands being placed on poor communities, both in education and in other sectors where community-based approaches are being developed.

What communities can and cannot do in education

These risks can only be resolved if education stakeholders develop a clear understanding of what communities can and cannot contribute to the education process. It is essential to recognize that the ability of communities to support education varies widely. Some well-resourced, highly motivated, and cohesive communities are capable of single-handedly financing and managing education on an ongoing basis. Other communities may lack the resources to make anything more than a minor contribution to the costs of education, or be unable or unwilling to work together. In the most disadvantaged communities the most limited support – beyond the act of sending children to school – may require substantial assistance from education partners. At the same time, communities are made up of individuals and households with their own needs and priorities, and reaching community-wide agreement may be difficult. Where this applies, capacity building efforts may be needed that create a sense of community among people who would otherwise be unwilling to work together.

Several factors affect the ability, and the willingness of communities to support education. The level of support and its timing and duration all affect the response to community-based initiatives – especially in rural settings where income flows and labor demands are uneven during the year and between years. In many cases, education planning and management will need to become more flexible and responsive to accommodate these realities. Communities will be most willing to support education where there is a desire for change and strong incentives for participation, and in particular confidence that support will provide the school with something it would otherwise not receive. Support is also most likely to be forthcoming where the community has negotiated the parameters of support, and where there is confidence that the intervention will be completed, that finance and support will be provided on the terms agreed, that changes in the pace and direction of the intervention will not happen without their prior consultation, and that contributions will remain in the community and be used transparently and effectively to meet collectively identified needs.

In many cases, concerted capacity building efforts are needed before communities can play a more active educational role. For example, some poor, rural communities lack the skills and confidence to contribute to school management, while some urban commu-

nities lack the cohesion and experience of working together to reach collective decisions. In these situations, using participatory approaches in the planning and early implementation stages of community support programs, and establishing a process of "learning by doing" can create the skills, confidence, and cohesion necessary for a community to sustain collective support for the school. At the same time, capacity building requirements can often be reduced by simplifying program designs, and ensuring that undue time and effort is not spent by communities on satisfying donors' bureaucratic requirements. Instead, the focus should always be on building a broadly applicable skills base at the community level that provides a foundation for engagement with the school over the long term. This is most likely to happen where programs allow for regular personal contact with the community, giving enough time to build trust, develop an understanding of local conditions, and establish clear channels of communication.

Community-based approaches to education development can only succeed where they have the support not only of the community, but also of other education stakeholders, especially teachers and government. If the principle of participation is taken seriously, communities must be able to negotiate roles and responsibilities. This is not always straightforward: community participation raises critical questions about the use and status of education experts, and the distinction between technical and nontechnical issues. The balance of decision-making power between experts, such as teachers and ministry officials, and the community is not always obvious, and must be negotiated. Equally, all community-based approaches need to recognize the role and value of expertise, and the practical limits of participatory principles.

Community involvement in education requires further changes among education stakeholders. Governments will usually need to become more flexible, open, and responsive in order to work as effective partners to communities. In many countries, fundamental technical and cultural changes are needed in the education sector, and in government more generally, in order for this to happen. For example, mechanisms need to be in place that promote accountability at all levels of the service delivery system, and place considerable planning and resource allocation powers at the local and community level. Given the critical role of information in participation, timely and free flows of information are vital, both between different levels of government, and between government and other education stakeholders. In many cases, new incentives are required to attract and retain skilled and motivated staff to the public sector, reward self-initiative, and promote flexibility and responsiveness. Within the education sector, the link between robust data and meaningful planning also needs to be understood and strengthened as ministries of education move towards a more regulatory and facilitatory role.

Similarly, an expanded community role in education can pose challenges for teachers. Teachers may be ill-equipped to manage major changes in education decision-making, and can feel that their professional status is threatened by community involvement in school affairs. In some cases—where they benefit from the loose administration and weak supervision common in many African education systems—teachers may actively oppose changes that increase oversight and accountability. Teachers may also oppose reforms where they perceive community-based education as entailing more work for the same or less pay. Ultimately, much of the success, or failure, of community-based approaches comes down to the issue of to whom teachers feel accountable. At present, accountability tends to be directed upward in African education systems, rather than downwards. Changes in education financing, teacher hiring and firing, and school inspection will often be needed in order to redirect accountability downwards to the community from which teachers draw their students.

For community support to education to realize its full potential, several key conditions must be in place. All the education stakeholders involved—communities, government, teachers, and often NGOs—must accept the need for change, and be prepared and able to listen, learn, and collaborate. There must also be recognition that community support is a process, not an event, in which risks as well as rewards need to be shared. Where these conditions are in place, communities are likely to make a full and effective contribution to education development.

Forms of community support, and risks and dilemmas

Community support for education can take a large number of monetary and non-monetary forms. It can be official or unofficial, voluntary or compulsory, and can be decided at any level of the education system. Monetary support includes fees, levies, and fund-rais-

ing activities. These can be intended to substitute or provide additional recurrent resources to those provided through public financing, or can be used for a one-off capital investment. Non-monetary support covers a wide range of activities, from attending school committee and parent association meetings, to providing labor for school construction and maintenance.

Three main forms of community support for education can be identified. These are support for the instructional cycle, school management, and contributions to school resources. Support for the instructional program is often overlooked as an area of community support for education, but it can be crucial to improving participation and learning outcomes. However, involving communities in the learning process poses different challenges from other forms of education support. Some communities, with higher levels of education, may be able to provide formal support for the instructional program, by volunteering as teachers' assistants or after-school tutors. For most communities, however, the single most effective contribution to improving school effectiveness is to provide a supportive home and community environment that reinforces the work of the school. This support can have a critical bearing on learning outcomes, by increasing the amount of time children spend being taught, by improving their mental alertness, and by making children and teachers feel that what happens in the school is valued and actively followed by the community.

School management is another area of support where community-based approaches can be less-skill intensive and more cost-effective than existing centralized approaches. Where it is undertaken carefully, community-based school management can allow needs to be identified more accurately, and can generate renewed interest in the school and a sense of ownership. Community support for school management has taken a number of forms in Africa. At its most limited, it involves an advisory or consultative role on the school committee. At the other end of the spectrum of support, the school is viewed as a community-managed resource that requires certain inputs and assistance from government. In between lie a range of policy options, including giving communities a say in teacher recruitment, or an enlarged oversight role, and giving communities a budget with which to implement their own school improvement plans. Again, the ability of communities to provide this sort of management support varies widely. Where communities lack skills needed to manage their schools effectively, additional assistance is needed to ensure that equity objectives are not jeopardized.

Community contributions to school resources are the most common form of support for education. Contributions towards the cost of schooling, or "cost-sharing," are usually justified on the financial rationale that government is unable to fund education single-handedly. However, it is also widely claimed that contributions promote accountability and increase community legitimacy to exercise control over their own school. Cost-sharing takes a number of forms, including formal direct fees and levies (user fees), matching grant arrangements, unofficial cash contributions to meet direct and indirect costs, and in-kind contributions. Although communities in Africa are widely expected to meet capital costs in primary education, they also fund recurrent expenditures. Support for recurrent expenditures poses sustainability problems. Schools need a predictable flow of income to meet their recurrent expenditures, yet communities are often unable to provide this. This is especially true among poor communities, who are often vulnerable to external shocks, and whose income is irregular.

These sustainability problems underscore some of the risks and dilemmas, both in terms of efficiency and quality, and equity, associated with enlisting community support for education. Recognizing these risks in program design, and developing safeguards against them, is a precondition of successfully expanding the community's role in education. Although community support for education is widely cited as leading to improved efficiency and quality, this is not assured. Quality issues are often an afterthought in community-based programs, and communities usually have limited influence over relevant factors, such as staff ability and motivation, and access to curriculum materials. These tend to remain the responsibility of government even in highly decentralized systems, both for logistical and political reasons. Similarly, efficiency may not improve as a result of increased community participation. Few community-level initiatives are grounded in detailed cost-estimates, and are commonly intended to shift or reduce costs, rather than improve the outcome achieved at a given unit cost. This is especially true in Africa, where community support has usually been enlisted in the context of a fiscal crisis and is residual. Therefore, the level of contribution is closely related to the efficiency with which

public expenditures are used. Unless community support in general, and cost-sharing practices in particular, are introduced in the context of a fundamental review and restructuring of education costs, it can actually promote inefficiency, by enabling governments to defer tough choices over spending priorities.

As well as efficiency and quality risks associated with community support, there are serious equity risks that must be addressed. There is an inherent tension between participation, and the unity and coherence of education systems, for the simple reason that in every society some communities are much better placed to help themselves than others. Increasing participation therefore tends to have a disequalizing effect on educational opportunities, and in the long-term on the social and economic opportunities associated with education. In most African countries – where wide wealth, educational, and political inequalities exist – the equity risks associated with expanding the community role in education are especially high. These risks exist at a number of levels, and community support can contribute to inequalities within households and between different households, communities, and regions. It can also entrench and deepen inequalities between the sexes, between rural and urban areas, and between ethnic and religious communities. These risks are greatest where decentralization to the community level is spontaneous and poorly planned and regulated, or where education costs are not coordinated with costs in other sectors of government activity, such as health.

Despite these risks, measures can be taken within the education sector to help ensure that all communities have access to a functioning school, and that no child is excluded from education because of an inability to pay. Full or partial exemptions from education costs, sliding scales for matching assistance, and upper limits on contributions can all help to safeguard equity objectives. In other cases, communities may require additional support, such as income generating schemes and management training, in order to develop their financing and management capacity. In every education system there is an in-built tension between the need for central control to protect access, equity, and quality objectives, and the need for local flexibility and autonomy in order to secure community support for the school. Resolving this tension is not easy. However, flexibility and autonomy are most likely to be achieved where there is a deliberate strategy to democratize education decision-making, and where government provides enough public funding to meet the core needs of primary schools.

The World Bank's experience, and key lessons

Despite the clear risks and dilemmas associated with community approaches, there is a substantial body of program experience that clearly demonstrates the potential contribution of community support to education development in Africa. Much of this experience comes from World Bank-supported programs. A substantial share of the education portfolio – 32 percent of total education commitments in the region between 1995 and 2000, at a total value of about US$300 million – is spread across nine of the twenty-two countries where the Bank committed new education lending during this period. More projects are being prepared in number of countries, including Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. The Bank is also supporting several social fund projects that have significant education components. Many social funds closely involve communities in project identification, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, and have made extensive use of participatory approaches. As a result, many of the social funds hold important lessons both for the education sector in the countries where they operate, and for the Bank's education policies.

These project experiences reveal the wide range of contexts in which the Bank is supporting community-based education, and the variety of policy objectives pursued by African governments in partnership with the Bank and other external agencies. At the same time, there are common elements to many of the projects the Bank is supporting. Most of the projects also focus on infrastructure and other physical inputs, and feature a matching fund arrangement, with communities required to meet a fixed proportion of project costs. For example, in Madagascar, Nigeria and Tanzania, communities encouraged to develop plans for school rehabilitation, which are then matched by government. Although there is less experience of the Bank supporting more innovative approaches, in Côte d'Ivoire an IDA project is aiming to get communities involved in classroom and school management, while in Mali community school management, and community support for bilingual education is being developed in 700 schools.

Two key questions should be asked about this existing body of experience. First, to what extent has the Bank successfully helped governments to develop viable community approaches to education development? And second, what changes are needed for the Bank's support for community-based education to be made more effective? It is clear that several Bank-supported programs and projects in Africa are generating promising results by working with communities. Although robust data is often lacking, and many of the projects are too new to provide clear progress indicators, many interventions have clearly improved the physical environment of schools, enhanced education access and quality, and contributed to wider economic and social development goals. Effective budget mechanisms, allowing resources to flow quickly and transparently from central government to intended beneficiaries, have been established in several projects, and communities have been given a greater say in how these resources are used. Projects have also generated benefits that are not easy to measure but which may still be real, such as a renewed pride and interest among communities in their schools.

At the same time, much of the impact of projects is unremarkable or inconclusive, raising numerous unanswered questions that require further analysis. Many of these questions could be better answered by strengthening the analytical foundations of the projects supported by the Bank. Often, the rationale for drawing on community support is unclear in project design, particularly on the critical question of whether community support is a financial expedient, or is inherently beneficial to the education process. As a starting point, future projects must make a greater effort to return to first principles, and be explicit about where community support begins and ends, and what it is expected to achieve. The narrow focus of Bank-financed projects on matching arrangements for physical inputs further limits the conclusions that can be drawn about what works and what doesn't. Although these projects often address an urgently felt and genuine need, so far there has not been enough Bank experience of community involvement in the more qualitative dimensions of the education process, such as efforts to improve student and teacher attendance and performance.

As a growing number of African countries devolve new education responsibilities to communities, the Bank must provide both the analytical and the financial support needed to ensure that these policy developments are implemented in an efficient, equitable, and sustainable way. For this to happen, it needs not only to distill and internalize its own experience of community-based education, but also learn from the varied experiences of governments, donors, NGOs, and communities. For this to happen, change is needed in four key areas. First, a more participatory approach to project development and implementation needs to be adopted, involving intended beneficiaries more closely in preparation and giving communities a greater say in the parameters of their support. This requires changes within the World Bank. As the Sector Assistance Strategy for the Africa Region notes, the Bank needs to become more open to new ideas, more willing to take risks, and make learning by doing more integral to its way of working.

Second, the Bank needs to demonstrate a clearer commitment to equity objectives. At present, the response of the poorest communities to Bank-financed programs is often weak, and it is rare for the most remote and poor communities to be targeted for the additional investments required to build confidence and skills. This process of building requires more time and greater flexibility and sensitivity, both in government and in vulnerable communities, especially those scarred by conflict or severely affected by HIV-AIDS.

Related to this, project designs need to reflect the additional costs of reaching under-served rural areas. Otherwise, there is a clear risk of educational inequalities between upper and lower income groups widening, and of projects failing to address educational needs where they are most urgent. These risks can be minimized through a constant emphasis in the Bank's operations on its official equity commitment, that no child should be excluded from school because of an inability to pay. Although this is a commitment shared by most African governments in their own policy statements, equity objectives in practice are often ill-defined. Related to this, there are clear equity risks associated with the Bank's current focus on matching funds in poor and under-served areas, which threatens to have a strongly regressive effect on public spending. The Bank's stated commitment is to target scarce public subsidy to those areas where unmet education needs are greatest. Yet, existing matching grant projects typically place additional demands on poor communities, while commensurate demands are not placed on urban populations, who already capture a dispro-

portionate share of public education spending. Allied to this, much stronger analytical linkages need to be established in the Bank's work between cost-sharing and broader education finance issues. Unless a thorough review of the cost structure of an education system shows that, after efficiency savings, further private education charges are essential for the effective operation of schools, and cannot be met through tax revenue, there is no clear justification for placing additional financial demands on households.

Third, the Bank needs to shift the focus of community support for education. The prevailing model of community support, which places additional demands on usually poor and rural communities, often without giving them a meaningful say in their level of participation, or in how resources are used, needs to be replaced by a more equitable and participatory approach. Governments must provide the core public funding required for primary schools to function effectively, and communities should be encouraged to make more qualitative contributions to education through a greater say in school management, and more active involvement in the instructional cycle. Shifting the focus of community support away from cost-sharing, onto issues related more closely to the education *process*, has the potential to address many of the underlying demand-side constraints to enrollment and attendance. Involvement in school management may also carry fewer equity risks than an expanded community financing role, especially where it is developed in conjunction with concerted capacity building efforts.

Empowering communities to play a stronger qualitative role in education will require root and branch reforms in many countries, devolving powers to local government and the community level. Decentralization necessarily involves equity, efficiency and quality risks, and is often politically contentious. For its part, the Bank needs to be clear and consistent in its support for government efforts to decentralize, and adopt realistic time frames for local government reform programs. Decentralization will not work if it is a strategy to bypass inefficient and corrupt government, or an abdication of responsibility by central government for basic social service delivery.

Fourth, these systemic changes can only happen if best practice is mainstreamed. The Bank must identify cost-effective and replicable community approaches that safeguard equity and quality objectives. At present, too few projects pay enough attention to replicability, and tend to operate as costly enclaves of innovation. A further limitation on the effectiveness of many projects is overlap and duplication with other similar initiatives, which can blunt project effectiveness and distort results. Where projects are successful, the benefits often dissipate once mainstreaming has occurred. This often reflects weak country ownership, and the need for governments to take a genuine lead in identifying sectoral needs and priorities. At present, community-based education projects often reflect the priorities of Bank staff, rather than of governments, are developed with only limited consultation, and are implemented by project units that are isolated from wider sector operations.

In summary

- Education is always a joint endeavor, and education development, at the speed and level needed, cannot take place in Africa except through education partnerships between governments and communities. At the same time, because of communities' heterogeneity, there is no blueprint for participation.
- Community financing should not be expected to substitute for the core public funding needed to create the basic conditions for learning in every school. Education partnerships are most likely to succeed where equitable funding is provided for all primary schools, and greater authority is devolved to the local level to allocate these resources and participate in school management.
- Effective decentralization to the community level will require fundamental changes in the cost structure of education, and changes in budget procedures that allow resources to flow rapidly and efficiently from the center to the school level.
- The World Bank has a critical role in assisting African country efforts to develop viable community-based approaches that safeguard equity, promote quality and efficiency, and fit coherently within wider governance structures. To perform this role, the Bank needs to broaden its project focus, and place a greater emphasis on project participation, cost-effectiveness, and replicability.

Introduction

Education is the cornerstone of development, and Africa is the world's most educationally deprived region. Without rapid and sustained educational development, Africa has little prospect of achieving significant poverty reduction, in a region where 40 percent of people struggle to survive on less than $1 a day.

But education development cannot take place unless communities are placed at the center of educational change in Africa—as partners to governments, civil society organizations and donors, and as educators and sources of knowledge.

The principal rationale for involving communities in education is that Africa's governments cannot be expected to achieve universal primary education on their own. The scale and complexity of financing and delivering universal primary education places practical limits on what central governments can achieve single-handedly, and requires decentralization of substantial decision-making powers to the local level. If education is always a joint endeavor, this is especially true in Africa, where most people live in dispersed, rural communities, and where transport and communications infrastructure is often poor. The isolation of many African communities, and their diverse needs and priorities, strengthen the case for devolving much of the day-to-day management of schools to the community level. Where this happens, many educational needs can be identified and acted upon more quickly than through physically and functionally remote centralized planning and management structures.

Cultural and historical factors also provide a strong case for involving African communities in education. Formal education systems are unlikely to achieve their objectives without the cooperation and support of the communities they serve. This cooperation and support is especially important in Africa, where community institutions often play a central role in child development, and where the schools are relative latecomers to the educational process. The ambivalence that a community often feels about the school, especially in rural areas and towards girls' education, makes it doubly necessary that there be a close fit between the goals and values of the school and those of the community. Accommodating the concerns, needs, and interests of communities in education planning and management can help to generate strong demand for education, and improve enrollment, attainment, and achievement.

Africa's disappointing educational record over the past decade has strengthened the case for an expanded community role in education. Although the sharp decline in access and quality that occurred during the 1980s has been halted in most countries, on most indicators a convincing recovery has not taken place. Perhaps 40 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa remain out of school, and for millions who do attend, education is a dilapidated building with few desks or books, staffed by badly trained and poorly motivated teachers, teaching an overloaded and outdated curriculum that gives children few useful skills for the world of work. Education financing remains inadequate to meet the scale of the challenge, and existing resources are rarely used efficiently to achieve good quality educational outcomes. This disappointing record, repeated to varying degrees in most African countries during the 1990s, has led governments, donors, and communities themselves to seek out alternative sources of fi-

nancing and modes of delivery. As a result, communities are now meeting many of the educational responsibilities previously reserved for government.

These factors have brought the education policy debate in Africa full circle to where it stood at the time of political independence, when communities played a highly active role in the financing and management of education. Increasingly, governments and donors are recognizing that the ambitious educational goals for 2015 that they have committed themselves to will not be met unless communities play an expanded role in education development. New ways of involving communities are being tested across Africa, often with the support of the World Bank. These extend from familiar forms of support, such as school construction, to more active involvement in instruction, management, and planning.

However, the policy debate on the appropriate role of the community has too often been a response to, rather than a precursor of, changes in practice. In many cases, decentralization has taken place by default, as communities have expanded their role in response to declining public finances and deteriorating services, rather than as part of a deliberate strategy to improve access and quality. As a result, community efforts have often substituted for, rather than added to, what is provided through the public system, doing little to improve education access or quality. Often, governments and donors have taken an "extractive," rather than participatory approach to community support, concerned more with shifting costs than with sharing power. This has resulted in a widespread disengagement in many countries from the public education system, since few people are willing to accept an expanded financial role in education without meaningful control over how resources are used, or an improvement in the quality of the education provided.

There are serious equity concerns as well. Public education systems in Africa have tended to deteriorate most in rural areas, where the practical challenges to delivering an effective system are greatest. Therefore, communities in rural areas, where poverty is deepest and most pervasive, bear the heaviest demands. Cost-sharing has frequently led to strongly regressive spending patterns, with public subsidies being targeted increasingly to urban, upper-income groups. Meanwhile, the ad hoc and piecemeal nature of much community support for education, and the de facto decentralization of education in weak states, has made it difficult for governments to ensure that escalating fees and levies do not act as a barrier to access.

If community support is to contribute to, rather than undermine access, quality and equity objectives in education, clear strategies must be developed that ensure that supply- and demand-side constraints to universal primary education are addressed in a systematic way. A proper analysis of what communities can and cannot be expected to do in education, and what types of support they require from educational partners, is essential for identifying cost-effective and replicable approaches that work in the African context, and for ensuring that scarce public resources are directed to where educational needs are greatest.

This paper is intended to address these issues, and consider their implications for the Africa Region of the World Bank. It is divided into six parts. Section 1 summarizes the history of the role of the community in African education, providing a context for current policy developments. Sections 2 and 3 discuss definitions and rationales for community support for education. Section 4 elaborates on what communities can and cannot be expected to do in education, and considers the implications of community support for educational efficiency, quality, and equity. Section 5 provides a review of World Bank education projects in the Africa Region that involve community support, and Section 6 concludes by considering the key implications of the paper's findings for the Africa Region of the World Bank.

1

A Brief History of the Community's Role in African Education

Communities play a vital part in the educational process, shaping what people learn, how they learn, and how they apply knowledge to the world around them. Education development cannot take place unless communities are at the center of educational change—as educators and sources of knowledge, and as partners to governments, civil society organizations, and donors.

In Africa, communities are central to the joint endeavor of education development. This section considers the broad historical and social context in which education development must take place in Africa, and examines recent changes in the scope and nature of community support to education.

Geography is a key reason for expanding the role of African communities in education development. The region's big distances, low population density, large rural populations, and poor transport and communications infrastructure pose major challenges to effective social service delivery, and tend to raise unit costs (World Bank 2000c). This is especially true in basic education, which is the largest and most dispersed sector of government activity. Where these conditions exist, centralized and physically and functionally remote delivery systems lead to slow, inefficient, and inequitable resource allocation and weak accountability and incentive structures, with few formal checks on what takes place at the school level. In contrast, community-based approaches can enhance ownership, accountability, and efficiency. The diverse economic and social conditions of African communities reinforce the case for empowering communities to identify their priorities, participate in decisions about resource allocation, and hold education providers accountable for giving children an acceptable standard of education.

The cohesion of African communities offers a second reason for involving them in education development. In common with other predominantly rural, agrarian regions, African societies tend to revolve more around collective social units—the extended family and the community—rather than the individual. The lack of extensive state-supported safety nets, together with environmental features unique to the region, have ensured that community-based organizations continue to play a crucial role in the day-to-day lives of most Africans. An African proverb, "one hand cannot tie a bundle," encapsulates the centrality of mutual support structures based on kinship and community to the social fabric of the region (Tembon 1999). Especially in African communities not severely affected by conflict and HIV-AIDS, there is enormous potential to contribute to education development.

The strength of African communities limits the independent influence of schooling on child development. This is reinforced by the short actual school day and year in most African countries. Studies from West Africa and Zambia show that children in schools operating double shift classes can expect to receive a little over 400 hours of instruction a year, or roughly one third of the school year of an industrialized country (Kelly 1998b, Kim 1999). Given that, in most African countries, children spend an average of three to five years in school, the cumulative amount of time children spend in school is short. The late school starting age in Africa—in Tanzania the average school starting

age is ten years, and in Zambia half of the children entering grade one are older than the official entry age of seven years—further strengthens the educational role of the community in Africa, making education a joint endeavor between the school and community to an extent not found in other regions (Kelly 1998b, World Bank 1999c).

Other cultural and historical factors strengthen the case for an expanded community role in education. The prevailing model of mass schooling in Africa is a culturally alien, and comparatively recent introduction to the region. It developed in response to conditions and needs far removed from the African context, and has encouraged a pragmatic and instrumental attitude to education (Dore 1976, Green 1990, West 1975). These same factors have limited education innovation and adaptation in Africa, with the result that schooling continues to be based on urban realities unfamiliar to most children. This incomplete fit between the premises, goals, and values of the formal education system and those of the community can lead to the school being viewed with considerable ambivalence, especially in rural areas (Serpell 1993). Giving communities greater ownership over their schools can be an effective way of overcoming these demand-side obstacles to education development.

In sum, geographical conditions in Africa, the urban bias of the dominant school model, widespread community ambivalence towards schooling, the short period of time most children spend in school, and the late age at which children tend to enroll affect the supply and demand of education in ways that have important implications for the community's role in education development. In the severely resource constrained setting of most African countries, failure to take account of community needs and priorities carries high costs for the entire education sector. Making optimal use of precious resources in the context of stalled education progress demands that communities be listened to, and involved in the formal education process.

The changing role of communities in education

Over the past decade, education policy and practice in Africa has been marked by a growing recognition that Universal Primary Education in Africa will not be achieved without effective strategies for community involvement. While communities have traditionally played a crucial, if poorly appreciated, role in supporting education in the region, several recent developments have raised the profile of communities as education stakeholders. Three key influences are identified here.

First, over the past twenty years a paradigm shift has taken place on the appropriate role of the state in the development process. This reflects both the demise of the centrally planned socialist economies, and the influence of policy experiments intended to reduce the role of the state in the economy, which gained momentum in the English-speaking industrialized countries during the 1980s. This policy shift extended to social service delivery issues, with the case for an expanded private sector role being made on the same equity and efficiency grounds often used to justify state provision. Reflecting and contributing to this change in thinking, elements of market discipline have been introduced into social sector systems in many developing countries, while the state has moved towards a role of facilitator and regulator, acting as a partner to a range of private sector stakeholders. Many of the recent experiments involving community financing and education management have been part of this shift in both policy and practice.

A second, related factor that has strengthened the case for an expanded community role in education is the growing status and credibility of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Covering a broad range of organizations, from small, one-issue community-level associations, to major international agencies with substantial financial resources and public profiles, NGOs have played an increasingly important role both as a source of education expertise, policy innovation and finance, and as a service provider contracted by governments and multilateral agencies. Despite their heterogeneity, NGOs at their best are more flexible, responsive, and experimental than public agencies, and have often achieved impressive results in the education sector through community-based approaches to development. This has recommended community participation to governments and donors, especially where—as in much of Africa—conventional government-driven, top-down approaches to education development have generated disappointing results.

Notwithstanding the influence of these factors, the disappointing educational record of Africa during the past two decades has been decisive in raising the educational profile of communities. Although the primary gross enrollment ratio in Africa almost doubled to 80

percent between 1960 and 1980, and secondary enrollment rates increased sixfold, this rate of progress was not sustained. After 1980 Africa's primary enrollment ratio fell – and has so far failed to recover to the level reached twenty years ago – while the rate of secondary expansion slowed dramatically (UNESCO 1999). Low quality and efficiency, and falling levels of public spending contributed to this decline: for the region as a whole, public financing of primary education fell by 6 percent in per capita terms between 1985 and 1995, while it increased approximately threefold in every other developing region (UNESCO 1998). In the worst cases, public education financing and delivery systems effectively collapsed. The broad development context in which most African education systems have been operating accounts for much of this disappointing record. Economic and political crisis, conflict, disease, and bureaucratic mismanagement have created chronic financial and management constraints to improving education quality and access in Africa's poorest countries (World Bank 2000a).

The failure of many African countries to sustain the education progress made in the initial post-independence period has forced education specialists to look at alternative sources of support for education systems, and to rethink the dominant financing and delivery model adopted after independence (World Bank 2000a). This dominant model reflects Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which places responsibility for universal primary education squarely on governments, stating, "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory." Yet, subsequent international statements and commitments have tended to be more qualified. By the time of the Jomtien Conference in Thailand in 1990, it was recognized that "free" education provided by government alone is often of an insufficient quality to benefit the individual child, the community or the country," although no firm conclusions were reached about what the response to this situation should be. At an international forum in Addis Ababa in 1997, a more concrete position was adopted for the Africa region – where resource constraints have been most severe and persistent – on the role of private finance and management in meeting education needs. The Economic Commission for Africa, UNICEF, and the World Bank approved a "consensus on principles of cost-sharing in education and health in Sub-Saharan Africa." This stated that "responsibilities delegated to school and community level should be maximized," and that "Governments should assist communities to develop transparent and accountable systems for raising and controlling local resources which take into account the total cost burden borne by parents and communities." This position has been subsequently reinforced in the World Bank education sector strategy, which argued for "fees and other contributions paid by non-poor beneficiaries," in order to "free up public resources for targeting to the poor" (World Bank 1999b).

Thus, the push from governments and donor agencies for increased community participation in education has been strongly influenced by financial expediency. Education is typically one of the largest public expenditure items, and resource constraints in Africa have led governments to search for alternative sources of support. In response, several countries in the region have tested new ways of involving communities in the financing and management of education, and enhancing community "ownership" of the system. These experiments have taken a number of forms. In many instances, school committees and parent-teacher associations have been established to provide a forum where community concerns can be voiced. Often these already exist, but have been given new responsibilities, such as the development of school improvement plans that typically are funded from a mix of public and private resources. In most cases community responsibility has been limited to school construction and maintenance, where in many countries there is a long tradition of community involvement. Yet, community financing and management of non-salary recurrent costs is also being experimented with, as is community hiring and firing of teachers. In some cases, especially in countries affected by armed conflict, many communities are operating their own schools without public subsidy. These may be public schools that no longer receive any state support, or schools that communities themselves have established.

Notwithstanding these recent policy experiments and reforms, in many African countries the trend towards an expanded education role for communities has been less a shift in reality than a formal recognition of what has long taken place (Kemmerer 1990). The shared characteristics of many African countries mean that education systems have always relied heavily on community support. Despite the existence

of often highly centralized and hierarchical states, weak central management and supply systems have given schools considerable *de facto* autonomy. Inadequate public funding and weak government capacity have also blurred the distinction between private and public education provision in Africa, with public education systems receiving substantial, unofficial private financial and management support throughout the post-independence period (Kitaev 1999).

Indeed, current debates about the appropriate role of African communities in the education process have brought the policy debate full-circle from where it stood forty years ago, at the time of political independence. During the colonial period, government neglect of education for indigenous Africans meant that communities played a far more active formal role in financing and managing schools than they do today. From the beginnings of educational development that took place in the late nineteenth century, Christian missionary organizations – rather than colonial administrations – were most closely associated with formal education in Sub-Saharan Africa. This mirrored the situation in much of Europe during the same period, when the state played a tightly circumscribed role in education development. Both in Europe and in Africa, educational expansion during this period was driven more by household and community financing – often channeled through churches – than by the state. In Anglophone and Lusophone Africa, most Africans who received an education attended rudimentary "bush schools," which were loosely regulated by the colonial authorities and financed primarily from tuition fees and other household and community contributions. In Francophone Africa, formal education was more exclusively associated with Christian missionary organizations, which were concentrated in urban centers and catered principally to the children of small administrative elites. Although many of these schools received substantial public subsidies – a practice that has continued in many Francophone countries – the majority of financing came from community sources.

Despite the significant role played by communities in education during the colonial period, the subsequent post-independence systems of mass state schooling developed in Africa placed little value on the role of the community – as a legitimate source of knowledge, as an educator of children, or as a partner in the management of educational change (Williams 1997). At the time of independence, critical policy choices had to be made by African governments about the future financing and development of education systems, in the context of massive educational challenges (Kitaev 1999). Pre-independence systems had relied heavily on expatriate labor, both for administrators and teaching staff, and were often racially segregated, with a high-cost, urban, minority system operating alongside a low-cost, low-quality rural system for the African majority. Integrating these systems, and expanding access – especially in rural areas – was an equity imperative in many African countries. The provision of universal, free primary education was also widely seen as the keystone of nation-building efforts, and an effective way for fledgling governments to secure popular legitimacy. Expanding secondary and tertiary education, typically from a very low level, was also critical to filling the gap left by departing colonial administrations, and creating a broad skills base for rapid economic development.

For these reasons, governments were keen to have as much influence over education development as possible. In many countries, such as Benin, Congo-Brazzaville, Guinea, Mozambique and Tanzania, this led to the nationalization of private schools. In a number of countries, education became – in theory at least – fee-free, and public education expenditures increased dramatically in an effort to satisfy unmet demand. Huge numbers of classrooms were constructed, teachers were recruited and trained, new curricula were devised, and further education institutions were established, including national universities. Cost-effectiveness and sustainability tended to feature as afterthoughts in this rapid educational expansion, while little recognition was given to community participation. Some notable experiments in community support for education did take place during the initial post-independence period, largely because of strong social demand for education. There was, for example, rapid growth in community operated schools in Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Tanzania, although the expectation often was that government would take on the costs of running these schools once they were established (Buchert 1998, Kitaev 1999, Ngau 1987). Despite these examples, the public sector became the dominant funder and provider of education across Africa during the 1960s and 1970s, while the formal space given to community involvement in education was steadily reduced and community initiative was stifled.

Box 1
Household education expenditures in Africa

Although education in many African countries remains technically fee-free, surveys consistently reveal that households are making significant contributions towards the total cost of their children's education. What households pay usually varies widely between rural and urban areas, and depends on the numbers of children in school, and the level of charges raised at the community level. However, it is clear that these costs usually account for a substantial share of non-food income in African households, and are widely cited as a barrier to education access by households in the survey literature. The dramatic enrollment responses in Uganda and Malawi, where fee-free primary education has been recently introduced, suggest that there is considerable social demand for education in many countries, but that limited effective demand is keeping children out of school, or leading them to drop out early (Colclough [ed.] 1997, Rose 1998).

- In **Ethiopia**, a 1995 survey found that annual per capita education expenditure accounted for 4.5 percent of total per capita expenditure. The average annual cost for a rural household of sending one child to primary school was found to be 58 Birr, roughly equivalent to $9 at 1995 exchange rates. Fees accounted for half of this expenditure (World Bank 1998).
- In **Ghana**, recent Living Standards Survey data shows that mean household cash expenditure on education accounts for 17.7 percent of non-food expenditures in Accra, and 12 percent in rural areas. The per student annual average expenditure on primary education is 122,000 cedis, equivalent to 7 percent of mean annual household expenditure for the poorest income quintile. Fees and PTA contributions account for almost one-third of this sum (GSS 2000).
- In **Nigeria**, extensive household questionnaires in 1997 revealed that annual household costs per primary student ranged from 1000–2400 naira. N100–150 is the daily rate for rural farm work (Francis 1998).
- In **Tanzania**, 1995 data showed that on average 5 percent of household non-food expenditure is allocated to education. In the case of primary education, households met 37 percent of all recurrent costs (World Bank 1999c).
- In **Zambia**, recent survey data shows that an average of 16 percent of household non-food expenditures are allocated to education (Penrose 1997).

The economic and political crisis that developed in Africa during the late 1970s and 1980s rapidly eroded this model (Lewin with Berstecher 1989, Mehrotra 1998). The highly centralized education systems created in the initial post-independence period became increasingly inefficient at converting scarce resources into positive educational outcomes. As financial constraints grew, the skills base and morale of the education sector declined, and physical and communications infrastructure deteriorated. As public education spending has been increasingly confined to salary costs, community support for education has expanded by default. Where teachers are underpaid or paid irregularly, where there are insufficient textbooks and other materials, and where classrooms and facilities are poorly maintained – conditions typical of most African education systems – the parents and communities who can are spontaneously providing additional resources in an effort to maintain functioning schools.

The scope of community support for education and its dilemmas

There is little accurate data on trends in community support to education in Africa, in part because of the one-off nature of much of the support that communities provide, and in part because of the difficulty of giving in-kind support a monetary value. Yet, it is clear that in many countries households and communities make substantial contributions to education financing (Box 1), and in some cases are now the principal funders of basic education (e.g., World Bank 1996a). This support takes many forms, including official and unofficial fees and levies raised at different levels of the education system, fundraising activities, in-kind contributions of labor and goods, involvement in school planning and management, and support for the instructional cycle. These different forms of community support are discussed in Section 4.

Communities have become major service providers, as well as being increasingly important sources of financing for existing schools. This is most common in countries affected by conflict, where public financing and management systems have ceased to function effectively, and communities have responded by constructing and operating their own schools. Among the most significant examples of this development is Chad, where the post-independence civil war cut many communities off from the state. One response was the creation of approximately 400 *écoles spontanées*. These schools receive little or no central government support, and now account for 10 percent of total enrollments (Patrinos and Ariasingam 1997). Another re-

sponse was a dramatic increase in community construction of schools. During the 1980s, *Associations des Parents d'Élèves* (APEs) constructed 3,500 classrooms in Chad, amounting to almost a third of the national total (Fass 1992).

Rapid urbanization has also placed severe strains on many national systems, and during the 1980s and 1990s few governments managed to keep pace with the demand for education in fast-growing towns and cities. In response, many communities have constructed and operated their own schools, commonly financed and managed through local religious organizations, or with the assistance of national and international NGOs. For example, in Cameroon community groups in the poorest areas of Yaoundé, where the population more than doubled during the 1980s, have responded to the state's failure to increase the number of school places in line with population growth by constructing and operating their own primary schools (Boyle 1996).

While these examples of community self-initiative are a powerful testimony to the commitment of Africans—many of them living in extreme poverty—to educational opportunities for their children, they raise a number of concerns. First, the enlarged community role in education in recent years has typically been a crisis response to deteriorating public services and resource constraints in weak states, rather than part of a deliberate strategy to improve education access and quality. Therefore, it has tended to substitute, rather than complement, the "core" public funding required to ensure that the minimum conditions for effective schools are in place. Although in some cases this ad hoc community financing has enabled limited educational development to take place, and in the worst cases has slowed the rate of educational decline, it tends to be regressive and inefficient, and is not a basis for financing education over the long term.

Second, as the state has abdicated responsibility in key areas of education financing and delivery, the burden on many poor households has increased markedly while the quality of education has declined. This effect has often been most marked in rural areas, where schools tend to receive fewer resources and personnel, and less administrative support than in urban areas. This is having a negative impact both on the ability and willingness of poor households and communities to contribute to the cost of education, and threatens equity objectives. Third, this trend has developed in the context of new development challenges, including the HIV-AIDS pandemic, widespread conflict, and rapid urbanization, which are placing enormous financial, social and psychological pressures on communities and households. Given this development context, there is a risk of unrealistic demands being placed on communities by governments and donors, not only in education, but also in other sectors where community-based approaches have proliferated. To avoid this happening, community support for education should be treated as a scarce commodity with opportunity costs.

Despite these sustainability and equity risks, education development in Africa depends on communities. However, this support can be sustained only if schools are returned to the communities they are supposed to serve, in a way that ensures every child benefits. For this to happen, proper attention needs to be given to the educational needs and priorities of communities. At the same time, governments and donors must be realistic about the capacity of poor communities to contribute to education financing and management. Most importantly, governments must ensure that scarce public resources are used equitably, with sufficient "core" funding allocated to basic education, so that the minimum conditions for effective learning exist in every school. In most cases this will require a fundamental restructuring of education costs, and in many cases will require additional public funding for basic education, drawn from more efficient and progressive tax systems (Colclough and Al-Samarrai 1998, Mehrotra 1998).

These access, quality, equity, and efficiency issues, and their implications for the way that community support for education is approached, are discussed in more detail below. In addressing these issues, this paper aims to answer the following four questions:

- What can communities be expected to do effectively in education?
- What can communities not be expected to do?
- What sort of support do communities need to fulfill an expanded role in education?
- What are the implications of this for the way that the World Bank works in the Africa Region?

At one level, the answers to these questions can only be decided on a case-by-case basis. Africa is a vast and enormously diverse continent, and the educational needs and priorities of African communities reflect that diversity. There is no single community education model that can be applied to the African context. Rather than suggest a blueprint, this paper is intended to provide a conceptual framework that can be used to respond to these four questions in a way that is consistent with the Bank's equity, efficiency, and quality objectives, and that supports ongoing country work in the education sector.

2

Definitions

Before proceeding, certain terms must be defined. This paper discusses community support for basic education in Sub-Saharan Africa and its implications for the Africa Region of the World Bank. Where "Africa" is used, it refers to the forty-one countries south of the Sahara, and the seven island countries geographically grouped with Africa. References to the Africa Region denote the administrative unit within the World Bank. Basic education refers primarily but not only to formal primary education. In some countries, basic education also covers the lower secondary cycle, while in other cases it refers to non-formal, as well as formal, approaches. Communities have traditionally made a significant contribution to non-formal basic education in Africa, especially in the area of adult literacy. While non-formal basic education is referred to at points in the paper, the emphasis here is on formal schooling of children, in part because this is where the World Bank has the greatest program experience in basic education. References are also made in the paper to community support for post-primary education, since many of the issues raised in this paper have implications for the entire education system. However, the principal focus here is on the primary sub-sector, largely for reasons of space and clarity: the role of communities in post-primary education raises a number of distinct issues that can be addressed more effectively in a separate piece of work.

Community

This paper looks at the role of the community in education development. Community is a familiar and widely used term; for example, Hillery (1955) identified ninety-four alternative definitions of community. However, its usage is often vague. For the sake of simplicity, three forms of community are referred to here, following Bray (1996a). These are:

- *Geographic communities* are what the term "community" most commonly means. It usually refers to a village, the geographic community to which most Africans belong, or an area of an urban or peri-urban settlement. Rural communities are usually more easily identifiable than urban communities, since they tend to have clear physical boundaries and more stable and homogeneous populations. They are also widely regarded as being more socially cohesive than urban communities and therefore better placed to use participatory approaches to development. Powerful kinship ties in many Africa societies, long traditions of temporary labor migration to urban areas, and the fact that most of the urban population are only first or second generation city dwellers mean that many urban Africans consider themselves to belong first to village communities where they were born or where their family originates. This has important implications for how community support for education is approached, especially where there is a substantial flow of remittances back to rural areas (e.g., Igwe 1988).

- *Ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities* are important sources of support for education in Africa, and often cut across geographic communities. They tend to exercise a powerful hold over their members, since most people inherit these identities from their parents, and share them with their immediate and extended families. Such communities are an especially active force in private education in urban areas, where popu-

lations are more heterogeneous and ties to a geographic community are often weaker than in rural areas. Religious groups are a particularly important source of support for education in most African countries. Christian communities have been highly visible and active in education since the late nineteenth century, and support schools across the spectrum of cost and quality; while in much of West and East Africa, Koranic schools – typically managed and financed by local mosques – are an important education provider, especially for children who may otherwise receive no schooling (Fass 1992).

- *Communities of "limited liability"* are more ad hoc and flexible than those discussed in the other two categories. They can expand and contract according to need, and are more explicitly based on self-interest than the communities that people are born into. They can cut across identities – for example, wealthy urban parents who have a shared interest in elite private school provision are likely to come from a range of ethnic and religious communities – but can also coincide. For example, a parents' school association is based on a shared interest in their children's education – once children leave school, parental interest in the school association usually diminishes – but members are typically drawn from an identifiable geographic community.

Three further, related points should be made about community definitions. First, the community served by a school within an administrative boundary often does not coincide with community boundaries. For example, a school may serve several villages with few social or economic ties to each other. This situation is most common at the secondary level, where communities are less likely to identify closely with the interests of a school serving a wide catchment area. In other cases, the lack of fit between traditional and bureaucratic boundaries may be more complicated. This is the case in central Ghana, where it is common practice for households to send some of their children to live with extended family members in urban areas, in part to take advantage of better education provision (Condy 1998). In this situation, households may be reluctant to support their own village school.

Allied to this, communities are not single-preference actors. That is, communities do not make decisions about the allocation of time and resources in the same way an individual does. Although communities, by definition, share many common values, needs and interests, they are also composed of overlapping social groups, centered on economic interests, gender, kinship, and family. Power and resources are distributed unevenly between these groups, and each has its own competing and conflicting needs and preferences. This can make the dynamics of community mobilization and participation extremely complex. Related to this, communities *per se* do not usually contribute to education, except in the aggregate sense. Rather, households and individuals support education, and it is typically at this level that calculations are made about the costs and benefits of investing in schooling. Therefore, achieving equity objectives in community-based education programs requires actions based on a clear understanding of *who* within the community decides, and *how* it is decided, about where the burden of time, effort and financial contribution falls, and what the attendant implications are for poverty and distribution (e.g., Botchway 2001).

Finally, most people belong to several communities. This requires people to manage multiple, sometimes competing identities and roles in an implicit hierarchy. This hierarchy of identities constantly changes, depending on the situation a person faces. For example, belonging to an ethnic community may become more relevant to a person's identity when they move away from an ethnically homogeneous village to an ethnically diverse city. The question of which community identity takes precedence in a given situation is further complicated by the fact that social identity is strongly influenced by the perceptions of other people: the identity a person prioritizes for him or herself is likely to be the identity by which they define others. So the choice of which communities we belong to, and which identity takes precedence in a given situation, is restricted both by birth and by the perceptions of those around us.

These three points have important implications for community-based approaches to education. Simply because people live in the same village, or belong to the same religious group, it cannot be assumed that they have a strong sense of community or a common interest in the form their children's education takes. Often, misguided participatory development interventions have been based on the assumption that a sense of community is a latent resource that can simply be tapped by enterprising development experts. This assumption is most likely to be made in clearly identifiable rural communities, where common inter-

ests can seem obvious to external observers, while cleavages within the community easily pass unnoticed. Experience has shown that mobilizing a community in support of education development goals is an often lengthy and costly process, and may require deliberate capacity building efforts that create a sense of community among people who would otherwise be unwilling to work together. This is especially the case among impoverished communities, who often lack the confidence, skills, energy, and finance needed to successfully implement shared initiatives unaided. The conditions that need to be in place for communities to make an effective contribution to education development will be considered more fully in Section 4.

Community support

Community support for education covers two levels of engagement – participation and involvement. Shaeffer (1994) defines participation as implying an active role for the community, whereas involvement denotes more passive contributions, and identifies seven levels of support. Community support covers a spectrum of activity, ranging from the basic act of using a service, to a situation where the school is entirely dependent on the finance and management inputs of the community. Between these points lie a vast number of potential forms of support that communities provide to schools on a continuum of private-public funding and control (Kitaev 1999). In practice it is often difficult to clearly distinguish involvement from participation, since in a given situation there are likely to be elements of both, with communities and individuals moving back and forth along the ladder of engagement from weaker to stronger forms of support. The main value of the ladder model lies in its distinction between token participatory structures and the real ability of communities to influence education outcomes at various decision-making points. Whereas token participation tends to involve one-off activities connected to a particular intervention, such as the construction of a classroom, building genuine participation requires a process of political change that has implications for all parts of the education sector (Holmes and Krishna 1996). This distinction – between the event of consultation, and the process of participation – will be referred to at different points in the paper.

Community-based basic education, referred to throughout this paper, includes both education in those public schools that receive significant amounts of support from the geographic communities they serve, and "community schools," which are largely independent of government control. Community schools are a subset of private schools; they are usually low cost, and are fully or partly staffed by volunteers; paid staff tend to receive much lower wages than public sector teachers, and facilities are rudimentary. They are usually intended to serve one of two main functions (Kelly 1998a, Hyde 1999). One is to provide an alternative to the education offered in public primary schools, usually to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups, such as children from poor households, girls, and orphans. These schools may also target youths and adults who have received little or no schooling. The alternative model tends to be less formal and more flexible than the public model, with an emphasis on open access and equity. Teaching often takes place in the local language and uses a different curriculum to that found in public schools, while "chalk-and-talk" methods may be replaced by more interactive approaches to learning. While the alternative model has perhaps been developed most successfully in South Asia, through programs such as BRAC (e.g., Rugh and Bossert 1998), there are examples from Africa of alternative approaches being piloted, often by NGOs (e.g., Muskin 1999). The second main function of community schools is to provide conventional schooling alongside the public system – either where there is no public school, where public school fees are a barrier to some households, or where there are insufficient places. This more conventional model typically uses the official curriculum, enabling students in some cases to transfer at a later point into the public sector, and may cooperate closely with the local public school.

Decentralization

For meaningful community participation in education to happen, a dispersal of power typically needs to have taken place, with gains in autonomy and self-determination at the local level . Therefore, community support for education is usually associated with elements of decentralization, as powers and responsibilities are

devolved by central government down to the district and community level. Decentralization means many things, and policy experience has shown that the extent to which it improves either governance or, more narrowly, service delivery depends on the rationale for decentralization and therefore the criteria established for its success, the broad political, economic and social context in which it happens, and the modalities employed in implementation (Manor 1999). Some basic distinctions between different forms of decentralization also need to be made. First, there is a distinction between decentralization by default, as a crisis response to a disintegrating system, and decentralization by design. This is especially relevant in Africa, where decentralization programs are often attempting to formalize and regulate fragmented service delivery systems that are already under various forms of local control because of weak central government. Second, a distinction can be made between decentralization to the local government level, which is usually part of a wider decentralization program, and decentralization to the community level, which is usually geared to addressing educational under-performance (World Bank 1999a).

A further distinction between deconcentration, or "administrative decentralization" through ministry structures, and political decentralization, can also be made. These two forms of decentralization often develop in parallel, but they need not be. Where deconcentration takes place without democratization, it can extend the physical and functional reach of government downwards, without government necessarily relinquishing control to organized local interests. Indeed, decentralization can have the paradoxical effect of centralizing power, ensuring that accountability and loyalty are directed upwards to central government, rather than downwards to individuals, households and communities. The extent to which deconcentration translates into political decentralization depends principally on the underlying rationale for expanding community support. For example, if community support for education is being enlisted simply as a source of revenue, then political decentralization is less important than if stronger forms of participation are intended.

Although the extent of political decentralization has important implications for the level and form of community support for education, there is no simple correspondence between the level of popular participation in an education system and the form of state governance (McGinn 1992). Perhaps the most important lesson of past experience in Africa is that extreme centralization and decentralization should both be avoided. Extreme centralization of government functions leads to institutional gridlock and inertia, and low-quality, high-cost services. Under extreme decentralization, education systems lose their coherence, and equity objectives are jeopardized. What is important to the effective functioning of education systems is that the roles of different education stakeholders are clearly delineated and balanced, with effective incentives and accountability mechanisms that ensure each fulfils its responsibilities.

Achieving this transformation in how governments and communities work together is not easy. Nor is it a remedy for weak or corrupt government – decentralization cannot be expected to address the underlying issue of limited state capacity, and must inevitably take place under the governance constraints this imposes. Indeed, experience from Africa and from other regions has shown that successful decentralization requires substantial amounts of time, finance, and high-level political commitment (Tendler and Freedheim 1994, Crook 1997, Schmelkes 1997, Gershberg 1999a, 1999b). Providing an adequate regulatory and budget framework that allows education decentralization to succeed places considerable fiscal and human resource demands on every level of government, and often requires a profound cultural shift that is likely to be both politically contentious and technically challenging. Developing mechanisms for effective communication between different levels of government, and constructive partnership with communities, NGOs, and other education stakeholders similarly places heavy technical and financial demands on central government.

3

Rationales for Community Support for Education

Increased community support for education can be viewed as an end in itself as well as a means of achieving certain outcomes. As a means, community support for education is associated with a wide range of benefits. Many claim that as people participate in the life of their school, they develop a greater self-awareness of needs and priorities, and gain in control over goals, processes, and resources. Education is expected to benefit in terms of the resources available to it, and in terms of efficiency, quality, and sustainability, where the intended beneficiaries are involved in its delivery (Bhatnagar and Williams 1992). Meanwhile, much of the literature on community education anticipates wider spillover effects, such as greater social cohesion and prosperity (e.g., Wolf, Kane, and Strickland 1997).

The expected positive outcomes most commonly cited in the policy literature are:

- *Greater ownership*, building consensus for change, enhancing accountability, and promoting sustainability
- *Increased participation*, leading to democratization, capacity building, and cohesion
- *Increased access*, where community support increases supply and raises demand
- *Improved quality*, as a result of greater accountability, choice, and increased resources
- *Improved equity*, where communities adapt the school model to local conditions and needs, and reach isolated groups
- *Enhanced cost-effectiveness*, where communities have control over resource use
- *Mobilizing additional resources for education*, through cost sharing.

This list of expected outcomes is not exhaustive. Some of the outcomes associated with community support, particularly those that are not educational, are less likely to be adopted as explicit objectives. For example, shifting education costs from the public budget onto households may be the principal motivating factor behind a policy ostensibly intended to promote community "ownership" of schools. Similarly, few community education projects involve overt political objectives, although these may be an important consideration for the policy-maker. The diverse range of outcomes associated with community support for education reflects the different and often contradictory reasons governments, agencies, and NGOs promote community support for education, and the various forms community support for education takes. It also highlights the need for clarity where policy objectives are concerned. Unless there is an explicit and mutually agreed upon rationale for education decentralization to the community level, means and ends are likely to be confused, community time and resources risk being wasted, and the overall effectiveness of community support may be blunted.

Five key rationales

Thus, the rationales that underpin community support for education are crucial, since they will influence both the policies adopted, and the criteria for judging success. Five common arguments in favor of community support for education can be identified:

• *Limits of state effectiveness.* Education is a multifaceted and complex process, and the scale and reach of education systems place practical limits on what a centralized state system can achieve. It is simply unrealistic to expect public authorities to supply every human, financial and organizational requirement, and where education decision-making is excessively concentrated, inefficiencies and distortions enter the system. Highly centralized systems, where the state attempts to do everything, also ignore the diverse conditions and needs of communities, and therefore neglect many of the demand-side constraints to education development. In many African countries, the inability of governments to provide a minimum standard of education provision – and their failure to make the necessary fiscal and administrative adjustments – has placed the limits of state effectiveness in stark relief. In much of Africa, tax systems are inefficient, there are chronic financial and technical resource constraints across the public sector, resources are frequently diverted from their intended uses, and the quality and quantity of services decline in direct proportion to the distance from administrative centers. Where these conditions exist, decentralized approaches to education financing and delivery that limit the role of the state and expand the role of communities in education partnerships are often promoted as a solution (Crook 1997).

• *Ownership and demand.* National education systems have traditionally been developed through supply-side expansion. Governments have funded the construction and operation of schools, and enforced attendance. The limits of this approach have become apparent in Africa, where efforts at education development have been thwarted by inefficiency and chronic resource constraints, and in some cases by weak private demand for schooling. There are several reasons for weak demand for education in Africa. There is weak effective demand – sending children to school involves considerable direct and indirect costs, which many poor people cannot meet. But there is also weak social demand in some areas – namely, where the education offered is of low quality, or is seen as irrelevant or inappropriate by parents. Low demand is most likely to exist where the community has little knowledge of or influence over what happens in the school, and where the school is deaf to the concerns and priorities of the community. In this situation, the community is unlikely to see the school as something that belongs to it, is less likely to send its children, and will have little interest in ensuring that the school runs effectively. This is a particularly urgent issue where schools are physically and functionally remote from government, and education problems cannot be dealt with promptly and effectively without community support. In this situation, enhancing the community's sense of ownership of the school is vital to raising demand for education. Requiring communities to contribute to the costs of education, and involving them in school management, can give communities a direct stake in the success of the school, and generate a commitment to education improvement (Patrinos and Ariasingam 1997).

• *Democratization and accountability.* Community support for education is often considered an important building block in the democratization of societies, since it encourages people to hold government accountable for meeting its core responsibilities, provides forums where weak as well as strong voices can be heard, and establishes and legitimizes collective decision-making processes. The connection between taxation and demands for accountability and political representation stretches back to the development of democracies in Europe and North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Similarly, some proponents of community support for education argue that where communities are required to contribute directly towards the cost of public services, they are likely to demand a greater say in the form and content of those services, and ensure that they are delivered efficiently. In Africa, where national democratic institutions are usually recently formed and fragile, effective participatory democratic structures at the local level can have an important demonstration effect, and can be a vital element in efforts to consolidate the development of democratic institutions. In education, where the scope for exercising the option of exit is often limited, the ability of communities to hold teachers, government and other stakeholders accountable can be a crucial element in school improvement efforts.

• *Efficiency.* Centralized and rigidly hierarchical systems often produce poor outcomes at high unit costs. Bringing service providers physically and functionally closer to service users by actively involving communities is a common response to this problem. Community support for education can be a sort of non-formal education for the community itself, as it develops an appreciation and understanding of education's differ-

ent roles and potential, and strengthens the community's capacity to organize itself. Thus, community support can help ensure that education needs are accurately identified, that accountability structures are enhanced, that teachers attend school on time and teach the curriculum, that school participation rates increase, and that pupil achievement improves. There are also strong incentives for the community to keep education spending within reasonable limits where they are meeting a substantial share of the costs – in contrast to a system where government funding is meeting all the financing needs. This is especially the case where, as in much of Africa, households pay few formal taxes and the sources of central government spending may not be widely understood.

- *Choice and competition.* The case for offering parents and children educational alternatives is based on two distinct but related arguments, both of which continue to generate considerable controversy. The first argument is that parents have a basic right to choose what form their child's education should take. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is clear on this issue, stating in point 3 of Article 26 that "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children." While in theory the state can provide for educational choice within the public system, in practice governments have a weak track record in responding to parental and community demand. Educational choice has usually depended on private providers being legally allowed to operate and respond to demand. The second argument is that subjecting education providers to market discipline by forcing them to compete for service users raises standards and improves efficiency. Where the state is the only education provider, many of the distortions and inefficiencies associated with a monopoly position in markets develop. Conversely, where there is a choice of schools, and parents can exercise the option of "exit," this sends clear market signals to education providers. There are numerous ways of introducing market elements to education systems, which involve different combinations of public and private sector inputs, and crucial decisions about whether public subsidies are best directed to institutions or to individuals (Patrinos and Ariasingam 1997). In most cases, they require an expanded role for communities, who have become major education providers in recent years as African governments have loosened restrictions on private schools.

Critiques of community support for education

There are counter-arguments to each of these rationales for community support, and they continue to generate discussion and disagreement. These counter-arguments usually center on the tensions between individual and collective benefits, the capacity of communities, and the impact of user charges on participation, and highlight the extent to which the expected benefits of community support are based on assumptions rather than empirical evidence (Lewin with Berstecher 1989, Reimers 1997). Thus, while poorly performing centralized education systems may make decentralization theoretically desirable, there are widespread doubts about its feasibility. Governments are often reluctant to shift power and patronage away from the administrative center, especially in a sector as large and politically influential as education. As a result, decentralization programs often stall, or are reduced to paper exercises that increase the size of the public administration, but fail to transfer significant power and responsibility to the local level (Crook 1997, Manor 1999). Many critics of decentralization have also questioned whether the most effective remedy for state failure is to shift much of the responsibility for education financing and delivery onto communities. This may be a particular problem where, as in Africa, the greatest unmet education needs are concentrated among the poorest communities (Filmer and Pritchett 1999), who often lack the skills, energy, and resources to fulfill new responsibilities. And while there are clear limits to state effectiveness in education, these need to be balanced by a proper analysis of what the limits of community support are – even in the most decentralized education systems, states need to continue to play a strong financing and regulatory role in education.

Similarly, the link between an expanded education financing role for communities and increased ownership, accountability, and democracy depends on several important factors. Financial and management support have the potential to increase communities' legitimacy to exercise control over their own schools. However, this is unlikely to happen unless it is an explicit objective of community programs; communities have the skills needed to monitor the use of school resources; and teachers and government – as well as communities – are committed to democratization at the school level. Otherwise, such contributions tend to function as an arbitrarily imposed tax, rather than as a foundation of participation. Communities can eas-

ily feel exploited where contributions are obligatory and the community has little control over how they are used, or community efforts are a substitute for the state's responsibilities. In this situation, school-community relations can be weakened, rather than strengthened by an expanded financing role.

Efficiency arguments favoring community-based approaches to education are also open to question. Although increased community support is widely claimed to improve the efficiency of education systems, and therefore to be a valuable way of expanding access in the context of chronic resource constraints, this is probably an oversimplification of an issue that has so far received insufficient analysis (Rugh and Bossert 1998, Hyde 1999). Claims for the greater efficiency of community education are often based on comparisons of cost – rather than cost-effectiveness – where community approaches are delivering lower quality education than the conventional state system, or where the two approaches do not share the same objectives. Experience of community-based education in Africa is also confined mainly to relatively small-scale pilot programs, many of them operated by NGOs, donor agency staff, and project units within government ministries. These programs often rely heavily on in-kind contributions, the intensive support of program staff – who are typically more highly paid and qualified than their public sector counterparts – and on prior investments made in state systems (for example, by using state curricula and publicly trained teachers). These costs are rarely fully factored into estimates of total unit costs, with the result that what are presented as cost-reducing measures may instead be shifting costs onto communities. This raises doubts about the replicability and sustainability of many community-based approaches to education development (Bray 1996b).

The assumption that demand-driven education lowers unit costs underpins many of the claims made for community support for education. Yet, while the tidy logic of demand-driven education may appeal to policy-makers, the question of who is generating demand is not always straightforward. National and community priorities do not necessarily coincide, and there are potential tensions between the two (Colletta and Perkins 1995). Issues like the appropriate form and content of girls' education and the language of instruction can be intensely political and are often a source of strong disagreement, both between government and the community, and within the community itself.

This relates to ideas about increased parental choice in education. Despite the benefits attributed to it, little is actually known about the impact of choice on education access, quality and equity, and there are few experiences from the African context that suggest how policies promoting choice can best be designed and implemented. And while the parental right to choose the influences and values to which a child is exposed must be respected, in practice this right is negotiated between a child's parents, within the community, and between the community and the state. Providing each child with a minimum common educational experience is both a political and equity imperative in any nation state. This imperative has to be balanced against the simultaneous need for ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities at the community and national level to be protected from discrimination by the majority.

The tension between a "communal" vision of decentralization, which emphasizes community empowerment, and a "liberal" vision, which promotes individual choice, is reflected most starkly in the impact of private education in Africa. Many African governments have accommodated the right to parental choice by liberalizing the education sector in recent years, leading to rapid growth in the number of private providers. Although the data is often incomplete, and definitions of the private sector vary, private schools now account for upwards of 10 percent of primary enrollments in most countries, and a higher proportion at the secondary level (Kitaev 1999). Although many private providers offer a higher quality education than the public system, their expansion can threaten equity objectives by increasing disparities in cost and quality between schools, and by entrenching existing inequalities, since upper income groups are able to purchase better education, and more of it, than lower income groups. Increasing educational choice can therefore make community mobilization more, rather than less difficult, to achieve. The experience of Nigeria is a case in point, where in many communities the wealthiest members are exercising parental choice by withdrawing their children from the public system and using private schools. This has eroded the ties between income groups within communities, and threatens the viability of community-based programs because the wealthiest and most skilled community members are reluctant to support schools they do not use (Francis 1998).

In sum, while each of the rationales summarized in this section make a strong case for involving communities in partnerships for education development, these critiques of community support highlight some important caveats. Although the scale and complexity of education systems make it both necessary and desirable that states formally share responsibility for education development with communities, significant risks are involved. Governments may not be committed to genuine decentralization of responsibility to the community level; the capacity of communities to support schools varies widely, and often requires considerable time and resources to be developed; the cost effectiveness of community- based approaches cannot be assumed; and educational choice and competition can jeopardize equity objectives. In no circumstances is community support a panacea for the education challenges facing Africa; even in the most decentralized system the state must provide many of the ingredients of a functioning education system, such as effective teacher training and deployment, and curriculum design. Other factors that affect education access, such as the condition of roads, and the time spent by households collecting water and fuel, require interventions outside the education sector, as do factors affecting learning outcomes, such as child health and nutrition. Thus, communities can only ever be one actor in a broad educational partnership that extends across and beyond the education sector.

In spite of these qualifications, community support has the potential to enhance ownership and accountability, improve efficiency, and expand choice in education.

Partnerships involving communities are likely to work best where they are deliberately structured to achieve clearly articulated, common goals, where responsibilities are clearly delineated and based on contractual obligations, and where decentralization is supported by a strong central government. Where these conditions exist, and communities are adding to, rather than substituting for, the education development efforts of government, community support can make a vital contribution to improving access and quality, and offers considerable promise to African countries searching for ways of accelerating and sustaining education development.

4

What Should Be Expected of Communities?

Ensuring that community support for primary education is developed strategically – to meet access, quality, and equity objectives – is crucial to addressing both supply and demand side constraints to achieving Universal Primary Education in Africa. The starting point of this process is to understand what communities can and cannot contribute to education. Allied to this, governments and donors need to know what kinds of support communities need to fulfill an expanded role in primary education and how this affects the way different education stakeholders work. The World Bank's relation to these issues is discussed in the final section of the paper.

The ability of communities to support education varies widely. Some well-resourced, highly motivated and cohesive communities are capable of singlehandedly financing and managing education on an ongoing basis. Other communities may lack the resources to make anything more than a minor contribution to the costs of education, or be unable or unwilling to work together. In the most disadvantaged communities, the most limited support – beyond the act of sending children to school – may require substantial assistance from education partners.

Factors affecting community support

Several factors must be considered when deciding which demands communities can meet. First, the duration of the community's involvement is crucial in deciding what level of support communities will give to education. Because education has a permanent physical presence in most communities, and schooling requires ongoing participation by students to be effective, a minimum level of sustained cooperation by communities is needed to ensure that children attend school regularly. However, there is usually a marked difference between what communities can and will contribute to education to meet one-off objectives, or as a stopgap measure, and what communities are prepared and able to provide on a prolonged basis. When the problem confronting the school and the remedy are identifiable, and community support generates immediate and visible benefits, communities are more likely to respond decisively to the challenge. However, experience has shown that sustaining community support for education is usually far more difficult than the initial mobilization of finance or labor. This is especially true where objectives and stakeholder roles are not clearly defined, and communities are not clear about what they can expect the state to contribute in the long term.

Second, community perceptions of what makes an effective school will also affect its willingness to support education. In poor and rural communities, where the average educational level is low, community members may be reluctant to enter the school, and may lack the confidence or knowledge to take an active role in their children's education. As a result, the teaching process in the classroom is often invisible and little understood, and community members rely on teachers to inform them of many of the problems facing the school. Moreover, quality related expenditures, such as textbooks and teacher training, tend to remain the exclusive responsibility of government, and parents are aware that they have limited influence over these areas. In these circumstances, the community tends

to associate an effective school with the condition of school infrastructure. A well-maintained and equipped school is the most visible symbol of the value attached to education, especially in poor communities where few other permanent or public structures exist. While community participation in school construction and rehabilitation can serve as an "entry point" for long-term community support, interest and commitment often wane once infrastructure needs have been addressed, on the basis that the needs of an effective school have been met.

The education support that communities provide also fluctuates over time. This is especially true in Africa, where typically less than 20 percent of the work force are regular wage earners (ILO 1998, Joliffe 1998). Most households rely on agriculture and informal sector activities for their livelihoods, where income flows and labor demands can be highly uneven. As a result, the timing of financial contributions can have a critical effect on household ability to pay, while year-on-year changes in prices and yields for farming communities make community-level planning for financial support difficult. The irregular demand for labor in most African communities also limits the in-kind support that communities can provide for activities, such as school construction, and the time available for attending community meetings and discussions to certain times of the day and year. These fluctuations in capacity also mean that communities rarely operate on a rigid time frame, in contrast to government and donors, who tend to work on strict timetables, and "freeze" program design once implementation begins. Where communities are given an expanded role in education partnerships, planning and implementation procedures need to be more flexible.

Fourth, the willingness of communities to support education needs to be distinguished from their ability to support education. Communities may be able to provide additional support to the local school but be unwilling to do so, typically because the costs of support outweigh the benefits. This may be due to the low quality of the education provided and the related failure of children to learn much in school; or because of the low returns to schooling, especially at the primary level. In some cases, it may be because the community views education as inappropriate for some, if not all, children. In these circumstances, the underlying causes of weak demand for education need to be identified and addressed before community support can be mobilized.

The distribution of the costs and benefits of participation within a community is usually uneven and complex. For example, households farthest from the school, or without transport, may find it difficult to participate in community meetings, and are usually less likely to send their children to school. Households are also less likely to support a school when their children have already passed through the school system, or where their children attend a school outside the geographic community. Where a large number of households do not have a direct stake in the school, mobilizing the whole community may be difficult, and support is more likely to depend on direct users.

Conversely, communities may want to provide additional support for education but be unable to do so. Usually, this is because there is no easily accessible school for the community to support, the community is too small to support its own school, or because the community lacks the resources to provide more support. In some cases, communities may make unrealistic assumptions about what they can contribute towards the cost of schooling, especially where they lack financial planning skills. In other cases, the willingness to contribute expressed through community forums may not reflect a genuine consensus, and can conceal an inability on the part of some community members to pay.

Conditions of community support

Demand is a necessary condition of successful community participation. Unless communities have a clear desire for change and strong incentives to support the school, the response to community-based education programs will likely be weak. Typically, communities support education in order to achieve an objective that would not be met without their involvement. The biggest incentive for communities is the promise of a better education system, which at the local level usually means an accessible and affordable school, staffed by competent, motivated teachers, teaching in safe classrooms equipped with adequate materials, leading to the acquisition of valued knowledge and skills.

If the principle of demand-driven community participation is taken seriously, then the parameters of support, as well as the respective roles and responsibilities of the community and other stakeholders, need to be negotiated. Giving communities a large degree of freedom to identify what they can contribute to education financing and management requires gov-

Box 2
Harambee schools in Kenya

Program experience demonstrates that communities are most willing to support education where the community has a genuine say in the scope and nature of their contributions, and owns the program objectives. Where government decides the community's role, tensions can develop between local initiatives and public bureaucracy, and education partnerships are unlikely to succeed. The risk of government bureaucracy stifling and ultimately destroying community participation is especially acute where community support for education is a response to state failure, and government is not trusted and lacks legitimacy. The development of *Harambee* projects in post-independence Kenya is a case in point. Initially, *Harambee* (literally, "let's pull together") projects had been voluntary, locally financed and managed initiatives in education, health, and basic infrastructure. However, growing state control during the 1960s and 1970s increased project size, and the dependence on outside financial support, reducing local initiative. Increasingly, project objectives reflected political considerations rather than community needs and priorities. Contributions became larger, and less voluntary, and inequalities between communities, regions and ethnic groups widened. The response in many communities has been to withdraw from formal *Harambee* activities and either return to smaller, more informal forms of community organization, or engage in more radical community action.
(Ngau 1987, Thomas 1987, Cooksey, Court and Makau 1994)

ernment and donors to become more flexible and adaptable, and recognize in their own planning and implementation practices the diverse needs and means of communities. This poses obvious challenges for centralized organizations accustomed to setting priorities and expenditures single-handedly, some of which can be met by decentralizing powers to the local level. In other instances, working with other stakeholders with local knowledge, such as NGOs, may be an option.

Communities are unlikely to respond to program incentives unless they have confidence in the terms of the partnership, and believe that interventions will be completed. This is especially the case in poor and rural communities, which are often vulnerable to exogenous shocks and highly risk-averse. Experience has shown that communities are most willing to support education where they retain control over program objectives, resources remain at the school level, and there is community control over how resources are used. Without these conditions, the community's confidence is likely to be damaged, and contributions are likely to be withheld (Box 2). Communities are also unwilling to contribute to what are thought to be government's core functions, especially where more privileged communities are sending their children to school without making equivalent contributions, or to support a "second-best" parallel education system lacking the academic recognition or effective linkages to post-primary education that exist in wealthier urban areas.

Confidence in the terms of education partnerships is most likely where the responsibilities of different stakeholders are delineated and communicated. This allows a contract to be established, which binds both parties to fulfilling their roles, and provides a benchmark against which to measure performance. In contrast, confusion over where community responsibilities begin and end limits the effectiveness of community support for education. For example, in Namibia the respective responsibilities of school boards and regional education offices in recruiting teachers are unclear. This has often made community participation through school boards difficult, leading to conflict and resentment between school boards and regional offices (Wolf, Lang, Mount, and Belle-Prouty 1999).

Once responsibilities are established, it is important that they be fulfilled. Where communities perceive that government has failed to honor the terms of a partnership, support for education is rapidly eroded. In Nigeria, the Universal Primary Education program pursued in the late 1970s foundered when public funding fell and central government devolved responsibility for primary education to state and local government. Communities became unwilling to continue supporting village schools where they felt government had reneged on its side of the contract by failing to provide well-trained teachers and adequate materials (Francis 1998). In contrast, where community support is genuinely additional to existing efforts, and government fulfills its responsibilities, community support is more easily mobilized and sustained.

In sum, communities will be most willing to support education where there is a desire for change and strong incentives for participation, where the community has negotiated the parameters of support, and where there is confidence that the intervention will

be completed, that finance and support will be provided for the agreed upon terms, that changes in the pace and direction of the intervention will not occur without prior consultation, that contributions will remain in the community and be used to meet collectively identified needs, and that, as a result, the community will benefit.

Building community capacity

Certain minimum conditions must be in place for community support to be effective. The community must be able to identify common interests and needs, accept and enforce basic rules governing their support for the school, and have a minimum level of skill, knowledge, and leadership to follow through on its commitments (Narayan 1995). The extent to which these conditions exist varies widely, and in many cases the capacity to support education must be created. Where communities are unaccustomed to working together, or lack the basic capacity to do so, participatory processes can be developed during the planning and early implementation stages of community support programs.

Indeed, building capacity for community support to education is often best achieved by actively initiating change, and establishing a process of "learning by doing." Gathering baseline data, or conducting a community needs assessment, provides a valuable opportunity to begin this process by bringing the community together and encouraging discussion about education needs and priorities, perceptions about the role of education in the community and the responsibilities of different stakeholders, and options for improving the school. Community members can be encouraged to participate by using more accessible approaches than formal meetings. School and community mapping exercises, applying Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) techniques that take account of local culture, and using readily available materials can be particularly effective in this respect.

Of course, the skills and knowledge needed for a community to support education are heavily influenced by the nature of the task involved, and by the complexity of the program design (Lauglo 1995). There is often a strong case for simplifying program design, and reducing the amounts of time and money spent building capacity, where communities are following onerous reporting and monitoring procedures in order to satisfy the internal bureaucratic requirements of governments, donors, and NGOs. Instead, the focus should be on building a broadly applicable skills base at the community level that provides a foundation for community support over the long term.

This challenge is often greatest in rural areas, which typically face multiple disadvantages in terms of their ability to support education. Rural communities are small scale, and usually poorer than urban and peri-urban communities. Rural communities also often have a history of educational deprivation, while the most educated community members tend to migrate to urban areas; therefore, the proportion of literate adults is usually small. This affects the capacity of rural communities in two important ways. First, the community has fewer skills and resources to contribute to school management and instruction than wealthier urban communities. For example, this affects the community's ability to prepare school plans, keep accounts, hold local government officials and teachers to account, and assist in children's learning, both in the home and the classroom.

Second, rural communities are often less confident in interactions with the school, which is often seen as an institution dealing with "difficult knowledge" associated with a powerful urban culture. This can be reflected in deference to teachers, the intimidation felt by functionally illiterate community members who associate the school with personal failure, reluctance to contribute to unfamiliar decision-making forums such as school meetings, and cynicism about the reasons the community is being asked to participate (Serpell 1993). In particular, suspicion of outside initiatives is often deeply rooted in rural areas where government is remote and taxation is arbitrary, and communities have fewer "weak ties" – people on the periphery of social groups who move between different groups and bear new ideas and information – than urban populations (Fukuyama 1999).

Although these attitudes and perceptions are an obstacle to an expanded community role in education, they can be changed through a number of measures. Perhaps most important, interventions by government and other education stakeholders should be supported by regular personal contact with the community, allowing sufficient time to build trust, develop an understanding of local conditions, and establish clear channels of communication (World Bank 1996b). Activities like adult literacy classes can provide community members with the skills and the confidence to

contribute to school management, and support their children's instruction. The school and community can also be brought together through events, such as school plays and open days. Similarly, making the school double as a community space for other purposes, such as club meetings, and health activities, can familiarize parents and children with the school and give a more representative cross-section of the community a stake in its maintenance and success.

While skills, knowledge, and leadership are crucial to effective community-based education, a strong sense of community—reflected in the ability to identify common interests and needs—is equally important to success. This social capital dimension of community support is one area where rural areas may have an advantage over urban areas, although this cannot be assumed. A sense of community involves cohesion and trust, and these can only be truly established through personal acquaintance and shared experience and values. Where there is a lack of cohesion and trust, considerable time and effort is needed to create conditions where the community can address collective priorities, while the benefits may only become apparent in the long term. This poses challenges in a policy environment where governments and donors often want to see rapid and low-cost results from innovative approaches. In many cases governments and donors will have to adopt a longer time frame and commit greater resources for community-based approaches to yield benefits. Expecting too much too soon from communities will likely cause program failure and community disillusionment (Narayan 1995).

Stakeholders in education

In order for community support to be effective, communities must be able to collaborate with other education stakeholders based on negotiated roles and responsibilities. Following Shaeffer (1994), three key education partners to communities—government, teachers, and NGOs—are identified here. An expanded community role in education poses challenges for each of these stakeholders, since it requires fundamental changes in the way they support education. This can create tensions because each stakeholder brings a different set of interests, perspectives, and resources to the education enterprise, and each may be reluctant to cede control of traditional responsibilities (Bray 1999b, Serpell 1999). In particular, enhancing the community's role in education raises critical questions about the use and status of education experts, and the related distinction between technical and non-technical issues (Rugh and Bossert 1998). For example, to what extent should the community be allowed to decide about curriculum content, standard setting in schools, or the use of corporal punishment? The balance of decision-making power between experts, such as teachers and ministry officials, and the community is not always obvious, and must be negotiated. Equally, all community-based approaches need to recognize the role and value of expertise, and the practical limits of participatory principles.

Government

Government plays a vital role in fostering and assisting community support for education. First, community support is most effective and easiest to mobilize and sustain where government provides the core public funding needed for a functioning education system. This includes not only the training and remuneration of teachers, and provision of basic infrastructure and learning materials, but also education policy development, implementation, and regulation. One important dimension of a government's role is the creation of an enabling policy environment that encourages community efforts, for example, through legal recognition of PTAs. Although most African governments now encourage communities to make a significant contribution to education, sudden changes in policy can undermine communities' willingness to make long-term commitments, especially where the reasons for policy change are not properly communicated to the local level.

Second, governments can directly promote community support, for example, through matching assistance programs, tax incentives, and recurrent cost financing of community constructed schools. In addition, government technical and professional support is often needed to build capacity at the community level. PTAs and school committees may require legal and practical guidance about how to carry out responsibilities, such as producing realistic school plans and budgets, maintaining accurate and open accounts of income and expenditure, and constructing school buildings. Such support is usually provided in the form of manuals and other documents, and through on site visits from district education officers and other ministry staff at the local level. Regular personal contact with government through site visits is especially important

to the success of programs in communities where skills, experience, and confidence are limited, and low levels of literacy make program manuals and other literature difficult to use.

Given the importance of effective central and local government to the success of community-based education programs, the weakness of public authorities in many African countries is a major obstacle to progress. Effective government–community education partnerships require flexibility, responsiveness, and an understanding of community conditions. Yet, African countries often have rigidly hierarchical and centralized administrations, characterized by secrecy and resistance to criticism and change. Education ministries are not immune from these institutional patterns, and tend to follow rigid and time-consuming procedures that discourage self-initiative in response to local conditions. Information and accountability usually move upwards to senior ministerial staff, and rarely downwards to the community level; there are often powerful incentives to conceal problems and to exaggerate and manipulate results, while resources released at the center often fail to reach their intended beneficiaries. Low skill levels, weak motivation, and widespread corruption in many public bureaucracies further exacerbate these systemic obstacles to effective community-government partnership. To a large degree, this reflects poor working conditions, including low levels of pay, and weak incentives for good performance, which make it difficult to recruit and retain skilled and committed staff.

Where these conditions exist, a profound cultural and technical change in the public sector is needed before government can become an effective education partner to communities. This requires systemic political and economic reforms that extend far beyond the education sector. Mechanisms are needed to promote accountability at all levels of the service delivery system, and to shift considerable planning and resource allocation powers down to the local and community level. Given the critical role of information in participation, there must also be mechanisms that ensure the timely and free flow of information, both between different levels of government, and between government and other education stakeholders. New incentives are required to attract and retain skilled and motivated staff to the public sector, reward self-initiative, and promote flexibility and responsiveness. Within the education sector, the link between robust data and meaningful planning also needs to be understood and strengthened as ministries of education become more involved in regulating and facilitating.

Teachers

Because the school is the locus of educational change, and the starting point for expanding the community's role, teachers' cooperation is crucial to the successful implementation of policy change. This is especially true in many African countries where there are a large number of physically isolated and dispersed schools, with loose links to the central ministry. Yet, teachers in Africa are often ill-equipped to manage this change, particularly at the primary level, where they often have limited post-primary education, and working conditions and pay are usually poor. In this situation, teachers can lack the skills and motivation needed to make a strong contribution to education reform. In some cases, where they benefit from the loose administration and weak supervision common to many African education systems, teachers may oppose changes that increase oversight and accountability. Teachers may also oppose reforms where they perceive community-based education as entailing more work for the same or less pay. Decentralization, especially where teachers become local government or community employees, weakens wage bargaining power and often reduces job security, while the transfer of management responsibilities onto teachers often involves a large increase in the administrative workload and a general decline in the quality of the working environment. Unless these concerns are addressed, teacher commitment and quality may suffer, and reforms can prove counterproductive.

The success of education decentralization to the community level depends largely on whom teachers feel accountable to. Because schools are the most visible state presence in rural Africa, and teachers are often the most literate people within the community, they tend to function as extension agents of the government at the village level. This has major implications for the nature of community support for education in much of the region. Teachers usually feel far more upwardly accountable to the public administration than downwardly accountable to the community from which they draw their students. This is partly a consequence of teachers being centrally employed and paid in most countries. Yet, other factors limit the accountability teachers typically feel to the communi-

ties in which they work. In Africa, teacher promotion is usually based on length of service, rather than performance; schools are rarely inspected; and teachers are typically transferred rather than fired for malpractice. In rural Africa in particular, teachers are often recognized by the community as authority figures, and they may jealously guard their professional status, regarding it as beyond the community's competence to judge whether they are performing satisfactorily. In turn, community members may feel it inappropriate for them to demand accountability from teachers.

These factors inevitably influence how community decision-making processes work. School committee and parent association meetings usually function as forums for teachers and community leaders to tell the community what they need to know and to enlist their support. Teachers may behave as "approachable experts," clarifying and correcting concerns and misconceptions on the part of the community, but it is rare for them to accept the need to learn from community members themselves. While this defense of professional boundaries is exclusive neither to teachers nor to Africa, the asymmetry in education, status, and organization between teachers and the communities they work in is probably greater in Africa than in other regions.

Still, measures can be taken to help ensure that teachers support an enhanced community role in education, and that decisions are taken in a genuinely participatory way. Involving teachers' unions and other relevant bodies in education decentralization, both at the design and implementation stages, can address many of the concerns that teachers may feel about change. Giving teachers a direct stake in community-based school improvement programs – for example by providing additional training and by rehabilitating teachers' housing – can help secure teachers' support for an expanded community role. Creating incentive structures that encourage teachers to become accountable primarily to the communities they serve – for example, by giving parents' associations a greater say in the hiring and firing of staff – can be another effective way of bringing the school functionally closer to the community. This approach has been used most systematically outside Afri[illegible], notably in the EDUCO program in El Salvador (Box 3), although community schools in countries such as Chad and Zambia have also directly employed their own teachers (Fass 1992, Kelly1998a). Similarly, incentive structures need to be created which encourage government, particularly at the local level, to behave more even-handedly in disputes between communities and teachers, and be more responsive to community concerns about teacher commitment and quality.

Box 3
Community empowerment—the case of EDUCO

El Salvador's EDUCO (Educación con Participación de la Communidad) program is one of the most systematic attempts to make teachers accountable to parents and community members, by decentralizing school management functions to the community level. EDUCO has its origins in schools that were constructed and operated by rural community groups during the civil war in the 1980s. These schools employed community members with a few years of education as teachers, and were financed by a mix of community contributions and NGO financing. Beginning in 1991—a year before the peace agreement that formally ended the conflict—the government incorporated these community schools and their teachers into the official education system and, with World Bank assistance, extended the community model to other underserved rural areas. EDUCO schools are publicly financed, and are required to provide a centrally mandated curriculum to a set number of students, but community education associations, whose members are elected by the village, manage them. These associations are responsible for maintaining and equipping schools, and for hiring and firing teachers. EDUCO teachers, who numbered 3,000 by the mid-1990s, are certified and receive roughly comparable salaries to teachers on the ministry payroll, but have no civil service status. EDUCO schools have been shown to have lower teacher and student absenteeism rates than other schools, and—holding student characteristics constant—comparable student achievement. These outcomes have been achieved in poor agricultural communities with low literacy levels.

However, EDUCO's success is qualified. The program has been most effective where some community organization already existed, and unit costs are no lower than for conventional ministry schools. Teacher turnover is also unusually high in EDUCO schools, suggesting that teachers prefer the security of ministry employment, and EDUCO has faced opposition from teacher unions whose wage bargaining power has been reduced by the program. It has also been criticized by community leaders in former conflict zones, who feel that EDUCO is an attempt to co-opt community schools associated with the political opposition during the war, and who fear that the program will lead to a two-tier education system, further widening the economic and social gap between rural and urban areas.
(Hammond 1997, 1999, Jimenez and Sawada 1999, Reimers 1997)

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

NGOs have become an increasingly important education partner to communities, largely because of two distinct advantages they have over government. First, NGOs are typically more democratic, flexible, and responsive than governmental organizations, and more willing to take risks. Often they have considerable experience of developing participatory approaches at the grassroots, enabling them to perform a valuable complementary role to governments and teachers. They do this by assisting in the transition from consultation to participation in school-community relations and through building the capacity of community organizations. Second, NGOs—especially religious organizations—may be more trusted by communities than teachers or government, and can be decisive in securing the support of the community for an expanded role in education. NGOs can achieve this by participating directly in the design and management of community-based education programs. In other cases, they can mediate between the community and teachers and the government in the planning and implementation stages of programs.

Participatory data collection and research is a key area where NGO experience and expertise can be especially valuable in community-based education. Accurate and reliable data and research is necessary at the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages of community programs and policies, allowing interventions to be developed according to local conditions and needs, and effectively targeted to where those needs are greatest. By listening to poor communities' views, participatory social assessments can be a guide to how community support should be organized, and what roles different stakeholders can best fulfill. Participatory research can also help mobilize the community by helping to create the capacity to systematically identify education priorities and needs, and ensure that programs are as demand driven as possible. Some forms of participatory research are costly and time-consuming. But NGOs in particular have considerable experience of more rapid techniques, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which are intended to ensure that the needs of the poorest people are reflected in program and policy design.

While NGOs can contribute important knowledge and experience to the design and implementation of community-based education, there are also limits to what they can achieve. NGOs often suffer from the same skills and resource constraints that other education stakeholders do, and may have powerful incentives to exaggerate their cost-effectiveness, especially where they rely on donor funding. They can also have development agendas that are very different from those of the communities with which they work—for example, concerning gender relations or what constitutes an appropriate and relevant curriculum. Unless these differences are approached sensitively, communities are likely to resist NGO efforts. Participatory methods introduced by NGOs can also have limited success, where communities and teachers are familiar and comfortable with centralized decision-making processes that vest power in teachers and other community leaders. This approach can be easily transferred to new participatory forums, reducing "participation" to a token and formulaic set of activities, fulfilled to satisfy the external sponsor, and secure whatever benefits their presence in the community generates. In this situation, NGO activities can create new forms of patron-client relations between the community and outside actors (Maclure 1995), rather than nurture democratic and mutually accountable partnerships.

In sum, for community support to education to realize its full potential, strong vertical and horizontal linkages must be established within and among the community, government, teachers and, where present, NGOs. Experience has shown that communities are unlikely to accept an expanded role in education financing and management without being given a greater say in the running of the school. This requires other education stakeholders to change their own ways of working in education, to relinquish some power and responsibility, and to develop new skills and capacities. This difficult process requires explicit objectives, effective planning, and clearly delineated roles and accountability mechanisms. Each of the stakeholders must have certain conditions in place for this process of change to happen. These are:

- Acceptance of the need for change
- Preparedness and ability to listen, learn, and collaborate
- Recognition that community support is a process, not an event
- Willingness to share risks and rewards.

Where these conditions are in place, the community is likely to make a full contribution to the success of the school.

Forms of community support for education

Community support for education takes a large number of monetary and non-monetary forms. Monetary support includes fees, levies, and fundraising activities. These can be intended to meet a shortfall in recurrent public financing, for example by purchasing textbooks or supplementing teachers' salaries, or it can be used for a one-off capital investment in infrastructure, such as classroom construction. Non-monetary support covers a wide range of activities, from attending school committee and parent association meetings, to providing labor for school construction and maintenance. Non-monetary support is an especially important component of community-based education in rural Africa, where the cash economy is typically small, income is irregular and unpredictable, and the isolation of communities means that many management decisions must be taken at the school level.

A further distinction can be made between voluntary and compulsory support. The community initiates voluntary support, usually in response to unmet needs it has identified itself (Penrose 1998). The community defines the parameters of participation and the level of contribution it is prepared to make. In contrast, compulsory support is decided outside the community, usually where government decides that it is unable to meet the full costs of education development from its own sources and identifies communities as an additional source of financing or labor. In these circumstances, many communities may simply refuse to comply with government directives. For example, in Ghana, a policy requiring all communities with junior secondary schools to construct workshops for practical training was introduced in 1987 without any consultation. Ten years later, only 40 percent of communities had provided the workshops, resulting in practical training being taught in most schools as a theoretical subject (Baku and Agyeman 1997).

However, the distinction between voluntary and compulsory support is less clear in practice than the literature often suggests. In many African countries there is a long history, rooted in colonial era tax policies, of community mobilization by the state through coercion or the threat of coercion. This power was often exercised indirectly through chiefs and elders at the community level (Mamdani 1996). In some instances, this has continued to influence approaches to community-based development, even where participatory forms are outwardly observed (e.g., Nindi 1990). De facto compulsion can also exist in a situation where education is theoretically fee-free, or fees are modest, but government provides insufficient public subsidy for the school to function without community support. This is a common problem in Africa, where resource constrained governments are reluctant to take the unpopular step of increasing official fees, but are also unwilling or unable to increase public spending or alter the cost structure of education.

Planning requirements can also blur the distinction between voluntary and compulsory support. Education development cannot take place unless governments are able to make meaningful plans within realistic financial parameters. These plans need to include reliable projections of what communities will contribute to the total cost of education. However participatory and negotiated the planning process may be, an approximate level of support—which some communities will be better placed to provide than others—needs to be decided on without the agreement of every affected community. What is important is that communities accept the planning process as fair, their differing capacities are recognized, and community efforts contribute directly to school improvement.

Similarly, the distinction between voluntary and involuntary contributions is often blurred within the community. If household contributions towards the cost of education are entirely voluntary and do not affect the right to use the school, there are powerful disincentives to contribute, since the benefits of community supported improvements are as available to "free riders," who have given nothing, as to those households that have contributed. For this reason, some form of sanction needs to be applied to ensure that support is forthcoming, and that the burden of contribution is spread equitably across the community (Bullock and Thomas 1997). At the same time, these sanctions must be balanced by mechanisms that ensure no child is excluded from school because of an inability to contribute.

Community support for education can also be usefully grouped into three principal areas of activity (Williams 1997). These are:

- Support for the instructional program
- School management
- Contributions to school resources.

Support for the instructional program

This is often overlooked as an area of community support for education, but it can be crucial to improving participation and learning outcomes. However, involving communities in the learning process poses different challenges from other forms of education support. Some communities, with higher levels of education, may be able to provide formal support for the instructional program by volunteering as teachers' assistants or after-school tutors. For example, in Guinea, mothers' associations provide after-school instruction to children identified as being at risk of failing exams and dropping out (Maiga 2000). Support for the instructional program can also be formally mobilized through school committees and parents' associations, which organize extracurricular activities, provide links between schooling and work, assist teachers – for example in preparing teaching aids – and encourage parents to help children with homework. However, the capacity of communities to provide this sort of support varies widely. Poor communities with low levels of education attainment often lack the time, confidence, and skills to provide formal support to the instructional program. Efforts to involve communities in the learning process will also depend on the cooperation of the school staff, which may not be forthcoming if teachers feel their professional status may be threatened. In that case, teachers need to be assured that community involvement is designed to complement and assist rather than substitute for the teacher.

Where the capacity of the community to provide formal support for the instructional cycle is limited, it can still play a crucial role in improving learning outcomes through more informal channels. Perhaps the single most important contribution communities can make to improve school effectiveness is providing a supportive home and community environment that reinforces the work of the school. In practical terms, parents can ensure that their children attend school regularly, arrive at school on time, eat in the morning before lessons begin, and provide time and space for children to study in the home. Communities can also help to ensure that teachers attend school every day on time, teach when they are at school, and inform the school and community of planned absences. Taken together, these relatively simple forms of community support can have a critical bearing on learning outcomes, by increasing the amount of time children spend being taught, by improving their mental alertness, and by making children and teachers feel that what happens in school is valued and actively followed by the community (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991).

School management

Until recently, most African countries reserved education management responsibilities for government. However, lack of government administrative and managerial capacity means that community-based school management is often less skill intensive and more cost-effective than existing centralized approaches. Community management can be an important building block in creating a sense of ownership, and has practical advantages for poor communities, who may be unable to make additional financial contributions to education, but who are often enthusiastic about being given greater decision-making power over their school. This has taken a number of forms in Africa. At its most limited, community support for education management involves an advisory or consultative role on the school committee. At the other end of the spectrum of support, the school is viewed as a community-managed resource that requires certain inputs and assistance from government.

In an effort to improve teacher accountability to the communities they serve, some countries have given communities direct control over the recruitment and employment of teachers; in other cases this remains the function of local or central government, but the community is given an enlarged oversight role. Another management role that communities can perform is the development of school improvement plans. These are designed to give communities greater freedom to identify their own needs and priorities. Typically, communities submit them to local government for approval before communities receive non-salary grants for their implementation. School plans can include responsibility for rehabilitation and maintenance of infrastructure, purchases of equipment and learning materials, and selection of textbooks from approved lists. These are often decisions best taken at the community level, where needs can be identified more accurately. Devolving responsibility for allocating non-salary recurrent expenditures to the community level can, where it is effectively regulated, remove many of the rigidities associated with centralized planning and distribution systems, which are usually slow to respond and often wasteful. In some countries, communities have also contributed to school management

by providing expertise in areas such as account keeping and learning evaluation.

Again, the ability of communities to provide this sort of management support varies widely. Many poor rural communities lack the management and administrative skills needed for their contributions in this area to be effective; some communities – usually in urban areas – are highly educated and have the time and skills to make a major contribution to management requirements. Where communities lack skills needed to manage their schools effectively, additional assistance is needed. This can take the form of workshops and PRA and PLA exercises that help communities define their responsibilities towards the school. Other ways of assisting include training in basic accounting and administrative skills and regular site visits by local education officers to respond to community concerns and provide practical support.

Contributions to school resources

This is the most common form of community support for education. The principal rationale for requiring contributions towards the cost of schooling is financial, namely that government is unable to fund education single-handedly. A further rationale is that contributions promote accountability and increase community legitimacy to exercise control over their own school. Contributions to school resources are typically used to meet capital costs, although they may be used to fund recurrent expenditures. Support for recurrent expenditures poses sustainability problems. Schools need a predictable flow of income to meet their recurrent expenditures, yet communities are often unable to provide this. This is especially the case among poor communities, who are often vulnerable to external shocks, and whose income is irregular.

A distinction can be made between official charges, which are planned and introduced by government, and unofficial charges that are made by teachers or community leaders. Unofficial charges tend to be most widespread where low official charges are not accompanied by sufficient public subsidies. For example, poorly or irregularly paid staff are more likely to seek supplementary sources of income than staff paid a living wage on time. Ad hoc fees and levies, and the income derived from the school plot – typically farmed by students during school hours – are often important sources of income for teachers. The extent of unofficial charges can also reflect the level of accountability and transparency in the education system. Where this is limited, malpractice is more likely to take place, such as where teachers charge students to pass end-of-grade tests. Where unofficial charges of this sort are allowed to proliferate, equity objectives are likely to be jeopardized and community support for the school is usually undermined.

User fees or charges are the most common source of additional education financing, and are typically contributed only by households with children enrolled in school. User fees are de facto taxes, differing from taxes gathered under a central system only insofar as the direct beneficiaries of the service are expected to bear more of the costs. They can be administered centrally, or retained for use at the school level. Community financing is an alternative to user fees, and draws on the support of the wider community, not just the parents who have a direct stake in the school. It also implies more active support than user fees and tends to involve contributions of time and effort in addition to money (Cornia, Jolly, and Stewart 1987). Community financing takes two main forms: (a) financial contributions in the form of official and unofficial fees and levies decided by government, community leaders, and teachers, and usually directed to meeting the same needs as income from user fees; and (b) money raised from fundraising activities. Community financing is a preferred option in rural areas, where communities are more cohesive and identifiable, and easier to mobilize. In contrast, user fees may be more appropriate in urban communities, where the opportunity costs of in-kind contributions are higher, support from the wider community is more difficult to mobilize, and incomes are larger and more predictable.

Perhaps the most widespread community financing mechanism is the matching grant, where government funding is contingent on the community raising a set proportion of capital or recurrent costs, usually through household levies or student fees. Matching grant arrangements have the advantage of enshrining the principle of partnership at the community level in a practical and easily understandable way. The efforts of both government and community depend on each other, and the responsibilities of both partners are clear. Because of this, matching assistance is less likely to suffocate community initiative than other forms of assistance. At the same time, the ratio of government to community contribution can be adjusted according to the community's capacity, while poorer

communities can make in-kind contributions where cash is not readily available. Although the matching grant approach has a number of advantages, it can also be unbalanced if the means and needs of the poorest communities are ignored. To be successful, complementary financing and capacity building strategies are needed to ensure that the poorest communities' initial social and economic disadvantages are not compounded (Box 4).

Whereas matching grants are often used as an ongoing financing arrangement, fundraising activities are more commonly used to finance one-off capital projects. Fundraising activities are a widespread form of community financing in many parts of Africa, such as Kenya, where Harambee rallies involve auctions and public cash contributions by local politicians and businessmen (Bray 1996a). Fundraising activities can also take place through churches and other religious organizations, professional organizations, cooperatives, ethnic associations, and emigrant networks.

Contributions to school resources can take the form of in-kind as well as financial support. In-kind support includes labor for activities such as school construction and work by students on the school plot, and can cover contributions of goods, such as building materials for school construction, or food. For example, in Madagascar schools have attempted to broaden access by accepting in-kind payments of rice, while in Botswana cattle have been contributed in some cases (Bray 1999b). In-kind contributions have clear advantages for cash-poor communities, as well as capturing resources that would not otherwise be used to meet educational goals.

In-kind contributions are most widely used to meet school construction and maintenance needs, where they can have particular advantages over financial support. Construction and maintenance are typically the largest education costs after teachers' salaries, and are often a major constraint on educational expansion. Simply maintaining the gross enrollment ratio at its current level of 78 percent in Africa between 2000 and 2015 will require an estimated 35,000 to 70,000 additional classrooms each year, depending on class size and the extent to which double-session teaching is used. Achieving Universal Primary Education by the international target date of 2015 is estimated to require an additional 150,000 classrooms a year over the next fifteen years (World Bank 2000a). The repair and maintenance needs of existing classroom stock are also considerable in many countries, where there is a legacy

Box 4
Matching grants—the Community Education Fund in Tanzania

The Community Education Fund (CEF) in Tanzania is a World Bank-financed project designed to increase the non-salary funding to primary schools in a way that improves the school environment, enrollment and learning outcomes, and enhances accountability and participation at the community level. The CEF matches funds mobilized at the community level with a government grant to support efforts to implement a school plan developed by the community. The project started in 1997 and now covers over 1,600 schools across 16 districts, reaching approximately 570,000 students.

The CEF has generated promising results. It has provided many communities with the opportunity to identify their own educational needs and priorities, and mobilized resources to achieve this—on average the non-salary recurrent funding available to schools has increased fourfold. In 1999, the CEF financed 1,600 civil works and construction activities, at a cost of $450,000. The project has also established a reasonably transparent and effective disbursement mechanism that gets money down to the school level, in marked contrast to the weak system of earmarked grants to local government that currently operates in most districts. Although the data is not conclusive, the districts where the CEF operates have in most cases increased enrollments at a faster rate than other districts. Average learning outcomes in CEF districts have improved at the same rate as in non-CEF districts.

The CEF has also encountered problems. Although it is working well in relatively prosperous and accessible areas, it is often failing to reach the very poorest and most isolated schools with the greatest educational needs. The average contribution in urban and peri-urban districts is as much as ten times that for the poorest districts in the southeast, center and west of the country. Moreover, in many communities no contributions are recorded—in one district over 20 percent of the schools recorded no contributions in 1999—while many more communities are mobilizing negligible sums. One problem is that, although the matching grant ratio has been adjusted from 1:1 to 2:1 for some districts, communities are limited to making cash contributions. These sometimes function as an enrollment fee that excludes the poorest households. Another problem has been weak ownership of the project, reflecting the one-off nature of "sensitization" at the village level, which has depended on head teachers informing communities about their responsibilities. Reporting and accounting procedures are onerous for poor communities with low educational levels, and this has often led to teachers dominating the decision-making process. The mixed experience of the CEF highlights both the importance, and difficulty of implementing effective equity safeguards in community-based programs, and the need for complementary strategies to build the capacity of poor communities to support education.

Box 5
Community-based construction in Mauritania

Mauritania has achieved one of the most rapid expansions in primary education access in Africa over the past decade, doubling the enrollment rate to roughly 90 percent. This has created massive demand for new classroom space, especially in under-served rural areas. One response to this challenge is the World Bank-financed General Education Project. In an effort to build on widespread community efforts in education, the project's primary classroom construction program is constructing 1,400 classrooms in the most educationally deprived areas, using community-based approaches. Responsibility for civil works has been transferred from central government, and is jointly shared by the communities and the *Agence Mauritanienne d'Exécution des Travaux d'Intérêt Public et de l'Emploi*, or AMEXTIPE. Central government's role is limited to oversight and quality control for the project, and to devising an annual program of classroom construction. Construction is based on community management and cost sharing, with communities meeting 30 percent of the costs. These can be met through in-kind contributions—where communities build the classrooms themselves—or in cash, where communities choose to contract out to local businesses. Payment of grants is made on a tranche basis, according to whether satisfactory progress has been made in line with project criteria, up to a limit of $10,000 per school. The project has significantly increased access, and improved the school environment in previously educationally deprived areas. The firmly contractual nature of the arrangements secured community willingness to contribute, and has helped to build a strong sense of ownership among many communities. Although the project's cost advantage over other construction approaches used in the Sahel is not conclusive, early indications are that the cost of construction per classroom is 60–70 percent of other projects in the region. Less positively, classroom maintenance is an ongoing problem, with many communities unwilling or unable to mobilize to repair and improve buildings. This problem is greatest in poor and less skilled communities, where initial construction work was often unsatisfactory. In these communities, the same factors that led to a weak initial response to the project are limiting its sustainability.

of under-investment reflected in crumbling walls, leaking roofs, and inadequate water and sanitation facilities. Moreover, reaching groups now excluded from education opportunities will require the construction of many dispersed, small-scale schools providing multi-grade education in remote rural areas.

The financial implications of infrastructure needs vary between countries; but for many countries they are unaffordable under existing cost structures: classroom costs in many African countries are as high as $8–10,000 – three to four times average costs in South Asia – thereby precluding an expansion of the system (Abeillé and Lantran 1993, Pouliquen 2000). So far, there has not been enough analysis done on the cost advantages of community-built schools over conventional models to reach firm conclusions. Community in-kind contributions are rarely factored into cost-estimates, the life span and maintenance costs of the buildings are not usually considered, and community construction is often of poor quality – for example, traditional designs are poorly ventilated, roofs leak during heavy rains, and they do not let in enough light for reading. However, some of the more innovative approaches to school construction in poor communities suggest that where there is consultative planning and effective technical assistance – such as user-friendly manuals, and on-site management – many of these quality and sustainability concerns can be addressed, and community support is cost-effective. Although current experience of government-supported, community-based construction is limited in Africa, isolated examples show considerable promise (Box 5).

Beyond immediate cost considerations, community based construction has further potential advantages. Schools financed and constructed entirely by outside contractors, without the participation of the community, are likely to be met with a large degree of indifference. In contrast, involving the community in construction is one of the most effective ways of developing a sense of ownership and raising private demand for education, thereby establishing a foundation for further community support for education (Bray 1988). It can also build the community's capacity to maintain the school, which is especially important in rural areas. Community-based approaches to construction can take a number of forms. Subsidies can be paid once a stage of construction has been completed, or matching fund approaches can be used, with the community supplying a portion of the total costs in the form of labor, building materials, cash, or a combination of all three. In other cases, the community is required to build the school as a precondition of government support, in the form of teachers, materials and other recurrent expenditures.

Risks and dilemmas

Community support for education poses a number of risks and dilemmas, both in terms of efficiency and quality and equity objectives. Recognizing these risks in program design, and developing safeguards against

them, is a precondition of successfully expanding the community's role in education.

Efficiency and quality

Actively involving the community in the life of the school has the potential to improve education efficiency and quality. Schools are likely to perform best where they have strong leadership, committed and capable staff, and are held accountable for the results they produce (World Bank 1999a). Schools are likely to be most cost-effective where they have clear objectives and plans, where needs and priorities are accurately identified, and where there is external scrutiny of income and expenditure. Giving the community a prominent role in education financing and delivery can help ensure that these conditions exist.

However, the connection between community support and education efficiency and quality is not assured. Quality issues are often an afterthought in community-based approaches to education development, where other considerations dominate, such as increasing enrollment or satisfying politically important constituencies. Usually, communities have limited influence over quality issues, such as staff ability and motivation, and access to curriculum materials. These tend to remain the responsibility of government even in highly decentralized systems, both for logistical and political reasons. Meanwhile, education programs do not directly address several factors affecting learning outcomes, as opposed to quality inputs. Examples include child health, and the amount of time children spend working out of school hours. While increased community support may raise awareness of these issues and encourage communities to tackle them, it can have the reverse effect, by creating additional burdens and negatively affecting the welfare of people (Box 6).

Similarly, efficiency may not improve because of increased community participation. Few community-based education projects are grounded in detailed cost-estimates, while at the project design level, education programs and policies are more commonly intended to shift or reduce costs, rather than improve the outcome achieved at a given unit cost. This is especially the case in Africa, where the role of communities has often been expanded in response to a fiscal crisis, and the immediate objective is to plug the gap created by falling per capita public expenditures.

Community contributions to education are also usually residual, in that they are intended to meet shortfalls after public subsidy to education is taken into account. Therefore, the level of contribution is closely related to the efficiency with which public expenditures are used. There is no firm evidence that under decentralized, community-based approaches parents have any significant influence over the costs of education that they are expected to cover, such as the number of subjects provided or the number of teachers allocated to a school. Unless cost sharing is introduced in the context of a fundamental review and restructuring of education costs, it can actually promote inefficiency by allowing governments to defer tough choices (Penrose 1998).

Efficiency can also suffer where participatory processes lead to communities avoiding unpopular decisions—such as increasing class size—that could enhance the long-term efficiency of education. Participatory decision-making processes are complex, and communities do not necessarily identify their needs more accurately than public administrations do. Often, resources can be wasted irresponsibly on prestige projects that do little to contribute to educational objectives, or which are never completed. This has been a widespread problem associated with the *Harambee* approach in Kenya, where between 1975 and 1984, over 30 percent of social and economic development projects started were never completed, and many more were of questionable value (Ngau 1987).

Efficiency can also suffer where governments, donors, and NGOs fail to respond to community demand for education, and community efforts are wasted. The experience of Burkina Faso is a case in point. During the early 1980s, communities were encouraged to construct their own schools as part of a national drive to expand access to primary education. Government was committed to matching community efforts by providing teachers for newly constructed schools. However, community demand massively outstripped government capacity, and although enrollment rose by 8 percentage points because of the UPE campaign, 600 schools were left without teaching staff (Holmes and Krishna 1996). Many of these community-built schools were subsequently abandoned, demonstrating an enormous waste of community time and resources, and eroding confidence and trust in the public sector.

Equity

There is an inherent tension between participation and the unity and coherence of education systems. This is

Box 6
Household "ability to pay": quality, efficiency and equity risks

Establishing the level of a household's ability to pay for education is a complex exercise. Even where communities are apparently able to contribute towards the cost of education, that support can undermine both education and other development objectives in several ways:

- Community support for education can have a substitution effect, for example where money is spent on charges that were previously used for other education inputs, such as textbooks, thereby negatively affecting education quality and efficiency (Penrose 1998).
- Poor households may reduce consumption of other essentials that can impact their long-term welfare, such as food and healthcare, in order to send children to school. Another dimension of this problem is that reduced consumption is not usually distributed evenly through the household. Often, women and girls bear a disproportionate burden, compounding intra-household inequalities and threatening to jeopardize other development objectives (Colclough and Lewin 1993).
- Sales of income-earning assets, such as cattle or land, may be required to support the school, especially where large contributions are demanded at short notice. This is a particular risk in rural areas, where cash income is small and irregular, and assets are often lumpy and indivisible. In such cases, community financing can result in serious long-term losses to the household and community economy.

because in every society some communities are better placed to help themselves than others. Increasing participation therefore may have the effect of making educational opportunities – and the long-term social and economic opportunities linked to education – unequal. In most African countries, where wide wealth, educational and political inequalities exist, the equity risks associated with expanding the community role in education are especially high.

Expanding the community's role in education financing carries equity risks at a number of levels. Inequalities can arise within communities, where some households are better placed to support education than others. This is most likely to occur where flat cash contributions are imposed, regardless of household size and income. This can have a strongly regressive effect, in part because poor households tend to have more children and higher dependency ratios than better-off households, and in part because of low and irregular cash-income flows. Among poor households, this can lead to the withdrawal of children from school, failure to enroll, early dropout, and a general disengagement from the school.

Devolving responsibility for setting contribution levels down to the community may overcome the problem of unrealistic demands being placed on the poorest households. However, planning capacity at the community level is usually weak, and contributions are often set at levels that the most vocal and privileged members find affordable. This is a common problem, partly because governments, donors, and civil society organizations tend to secure community cooperation through leaders who are typically older, male, and relatively wealthy, and partly because projects are usually designed to be understood and implemented by literate adults. This may be necessary to the success of programs. However, it risks reinforcing existing decision-making processes that exclude key stakeholders at the community level, and can encourage patron-client relations between communities and their leaders, legitimizing the accumulation of disproportionate wealth and power (Thomas 1987).

A recent study from Uganda illustrates this problem. Site visits found finance decisions in PTA meetings were sometimes stage-managed, with challenges to the way that meetings were conducted typically dealt with by points of information or order. Parents who persistently questioned financial irregularities were accused of ulterior motives and even told to withdraw their children from school. Often, financial statements were brought to meetings late – after people had become tired, and many had left. The study found that many parents viewed PTA annual meetings simply as a forum where teachers came together with the most privileged community members to increase parental contribution levels (Bray 1999a). Unless community education programs include safeguards against such abuses, community support can produce inequities. Whether contribution levels are set by government or by the community, equity objectives can be met only if program design is flexible enough to allow contributions to be adjusted between and within communities according to ability to pay.

Raising contribution levels can widen educational inequalities between the sexes, as well as between income groups. Where households are unable to afford to send every child to school, girls are typically withdrawn from school before boys. This reflects the higher opportunity costs of girls' primary schooling in most parts of Africa, where girls are traditionally assigned the most time and energy consuming tasks, such as fuel and water collection, food preparation, and car-

ing for younger siblings. Gender inequality also reflects marital and heredity practices – raising contribution levels is most likely to lead to enrollment disparities in exogamous societies, where daughters join the husband's household on marriage, and therefore represent a lost investment to parents.

Inequalities can also develop between schools and the communities they serve, often along rural-urban and regional lines. This happens for two connected reasons. First, some communities have the skills, resources, and confidence needed to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by education decentralization, while others – such as subsistence farming communities, pastoralists, and those communities worst affected by HIV-AIDS – lack the means to respond fully. Second, the same communities that are best placed to help themselves will often receive more and better quality public services than poor and remote communities. This strongly regressive, pro-urban bias in community contributions to education reflects several factors, including the practical difficulty of reaching dispersed rural communities, the political expedient of satisfying urban constituents who can easily express their discontent with government, and the fact that rural and poor communities tend to be more cohesive and identifiable than those in urban areas. Donors often implicitly endorse and reinforce this bias where community initiatives are confined to rural areas and give insufficient consideration to the education costs already being met by the poor. If it is unrealistic to expect urban populations to make collective contributions of time and effort to education, then there is a strong equity case for larger cash contributions in urban areas as part of an equalization formula. Although there are few examples of this happening, Bray (1996a) cites a case from Malawi, where local government in the city of Lilongwe charged an education levy of 5 kwacha on each household in lieu of in-kind contributions made in rural areas.

In other situations, regional and rural-urban inequalities can coincide with religious and ethnic differences. This is a particular risk where an ethnic group has a history of self-help in education, often connected to Christian missionary activity. For example, in Nigeria, Igbo lineage groups under the authority of the oldest male members have long provided substantial support to their children's education, which has become a source of open competition between communities (Igwe 1988). Similar traditions of self-help can be found among the Chagga people in Tanzania, and the Kikuyu people in Kenya (Samoff 1990, Ngau 1987). Conversely, some groups have much weaker traditions of community initiative, and are unlikely to play an expanded role without additional incentives and support. In this situation, unchecked decentralization to the community level carries the risk of widening existing educational inequalities.

This can carry political, as well as economic and social risks. In Africa, many countries have deep linguistic, ethnic, and religious divisions, and a fragile sense of nationhood. On many occasions, this has been a factor in internal conflict. In the past decade, more than one-third of African countries have experienced internal armed conflict, and there is often an urgent need for education systems that promote values of unity, understanding, and reconciliation. Yet, where government has relinquished a large part of the responsibility for social sector financing and delivery, it has both less direct control and less of a legitimate claim over the forms that education provision takes. Although communities are rarely given formal control by government over what is taught in schools, and who it is taught by, education decentralization and liberalization creates a space for ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups to operate, either as service providers, or more informally by influencing education policy and practice at the local level. In the worst cases, community-based education can provide a platform for people whose aim is to foment inter-ethnic or inter-religious suspicion and hostility.

These threats to equity objectives are greatest where decentralization to the community level is spontaneous, or is poorly planned and regulated. This is the case in much of Africa, where government and donor equity objectives are ill-defined, and education programs and policies are unclear about who should benefit from public subsidy to education, or how that subsidy will reach the intended beneficiaries. Effective targeting depends on robust and up-to-date data, available at different levels of disaggregation, which provides a clear picture of the means and needs of each education stakeholder. Yet often this data is unavailable, or is not put to good use in planning and implementation, either because of capacity constraints, or because the link between data and effective planning is not fully appreciated. Even where good quality data is available and is used, targeting public subsidy poses major challenges. Income thresholds for determining

eligibility are notoriously difficult to define and implement (Penrose 1997). This is especially true in countries where government accounts, collection, and accountability systems are weak, or where the target group differs from the general population. In particular, the more heterogeneous and dispersed, and less stable the target population is, the more difficult it is to target subsidy accurately (Cornia, Jolly, and Stewart 1987). This poses a particular challenge to effective targeting of public subsidy in urban and peri-urban areas, where a growing number of poor Africans live.

A further threat to equity objectives in education is the recent proliferation of community initiatives across different sectors of government activity in Africa. Government ministries and donor agency sector units tend to work in isolation from each another. As a result, community initiatives in education, health, water, roads, irrigation, pest-control, and other areas are usually established with little or no reference to what is happening in other sectors, or what level of total contribution is realistic. This can place competing demands on communities and households, and force invidious choices between basic needs: should a household pay towards the installation of a water pump by withdrawing a daughter from school, or support a pest-control program that will protect their crops by forgoing essential medical treatment? Because the relationship between education and other dimensions of development is mutually reinforcing, uncontrolled multiple demands on poor communities' resources can thwart both education development and general poverty reduction efforts. Establishing clear channels of communication between sectors at every level of government – within donor agencies and among government, donors, and other education stakeholders – is essential to ensuring that unrealistic demands are not made of communities, and that basic needs are protected.

Despite these risks, measures can be taken within the education sector to ensure that all communities have access to a functioning school, and that no child is excluded from education because of an inability to pay. Full or partial exemptions from contributions can be made at the community or household level; matching assistance can be provided on a sliding scale to communities, according to their capacity; upper limits can be placed on the contributions that are set at the community or local government level; and additional support can be provided to communities that require longer periods of time to develop their financing and management capacity. For example, income-generating schemes to provide the school with a regular income can be devised, and management training can be provided to PTAs. In other cases, there may be scope for community education programs to double as a form of entitlement protection in poor communities. For example, school construction programs can provide temporary employment creation and training, where income earning opportunities and skill levels are limited.

In sum, there is an in-built tension in every education system between the need for central control to protect access, equity, and quality objectives, and the need for local flexibility and autonomy in order to secure community support for the school (Swartland and Taylor 1988). The balance between these two sets of objectives will vary according to the local context, and decisions about where it lies are likely to generate considerable controversy. It is therefore important that it is based on a proper analysis of community and household needs and means. In equity terms, it makes sense where resources for education are especially scarce to increase private contributions from better-off groups, at higher levels of the education system, and target the public subsidy that is released to the poorest communities. This is often advanced as a rationale for an expanded community role in education, including in the World Bank's own literature (e.g., World Bank 1999b, 2000a).

However, there is little evidence from Africa of increased private contributions to education leading to reallocation towards the poor within education budgets. In practice, where there are severe public sector resource constraints the opposite usually happens: subsidies are directed not to the poorest communities, but to the better-off, with the poor meeting a disproportionate share of additional private costs. This is partly because spending cuts, with which increased private contributions are usually associated, have tended to be unplanned, and have taken place in education systems that are already regressive. Indeed, education charges are unlikely to release additional public subsidy for the poor unless they are introduced in the context of fundamental changes in budget priorities and cost-structures. This requires effective sector planning and sustained budget reform, which is time-consuming, technically demanding, and politically hazardous (Hinchliffe 1993, Penrose 1997, 1998).

The role of the community in education: key lessons

In sum, education development in Africa cannot be achieved without the active support of communities, but for this support to be forthcoming, the limits of what communities can do need to be recognized, and certain conditions must be in place. The following lessons about what the community can and cannot be expected to do can be summarized as follows:

- Community support for education is most likely to be sustainable where it is grounded in a meaningful partnership between the community, teachers and government, based on common objectives, clearly delineated responsibilities, and effective accountability mechanisms.
- Community demand for change and a willingness to contribute to education are necessary conditions of successful mobilization and participation.
- Willingness and ability to support education are affected by the level, timing, and duration of community contributions, and the extent to which resources are used transparently at the community level, to address needs.
- Communities require a minimum level of skills, cohesion, and confidence to be able to contribute to education. This capacity often needs to be created, and can require considerable time and resources, particularly in poor communities where unmet educational needs are greatest.
- Effective community support requires strong partnerships with central and local government, and cooperation from teachers and NGOs. This implies an openness to dialogue, and new ways of working for all these stakeholders.
- Community support for education carries important risks for education quality, efficiency, and equity. For community support to realize its potential, programs need to recognize these risks, and safeguard against them.

5

World Bank Community-based Education Projects in the Africa Region

This section provides a review of current education projects involving communities that the World Bank is supporting in Sub-Saharan Africa. The project mechanisms, achievements, and challenges are summarized. The total value of new lending for education projects involving communities over the period 1995–2000 stands at $301 million, or 32 percent of total education commitments in the region. This is a substantial share of the education portfolio, and is spread across nine of the twenty-two countries where the Bank committed new education lending during this period. These project experiences reveal the wide range of contexts in which the Bank is supporting community-based education, and the variety of policy objectives pursued by governments, in partnership with the Bank, in Africa. At the same time, there are common elements to many of the projects identified here. Perhaps most importantly, these different projects are underpinned by a shared rationale that community-based school financing and management needs to be expanded and systematized in a region where states are struggling to meet their minimum responsibility for providing education. Most of the projects reviewed in this section also feature a matching fund arrangement, with communities required to meet a fixed proportion of project costs. Most of these focus on infrastructure and other physical inputs (Table 1). The final section of the paper considers the implications of this emphasis on communities as a source of education financing, and the scope for broadening the forms of community participation supported by the Bank.

Although the review is intended to be as comprehensive as possible, decisions had to be made about which projects should be included. For example, current projects in Guinea and Senegal involve limited community support in literacy sub-components, but this is not the emphasis even of these sub-components. For most of the projects discussed below, only one part – such as the Community Education Fund in Tanzania – is explicitly designed to draw on community support, and much of the funding is directed to meeting other needs, such as textbook procurement and capacity building in central ministries. Meanwhile, some projects – in Burkina Faso, Burundi, and Chad – are under preparation and are therefore not included. Finally, the Bank is supporting several social fund projects that have significant education components. Many social funds closely involve communities in project identification, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, and have made extensive use of participatory approaches. These experiences hold important lessons for the education sector, and are discussed in conjunction with education sector projects in the countries that are covered in the review, as well as in Box 7.

Côte d'Ivoire—Education and Training Support Project

Côte d'Ivoire undertook a rapid state-led expansion of its education system during the 1960s and 1970s, with uneven results. In urban areas, primary education coverage was almost universal by the late 1970s, and access to secondary and tertiary education increased. However, unit costs were high, while progress was slow in rural areas, and for girls. Economic decline in the 1980s eroded the gains of previous decades.

Public spending on education fell in absolute terms, at a time when household incomes were falling. Between 1985 and 1995, the proportion of Ivorians living below the poverty line more than tripled to 37 percent. Rising private education costs, increasing levels of poverty, the decline in formal sector employment opportunities, and the low quality of education all contributed to declining primary enrollment and attainment. By 1995, the primary Net Enrollment Ratio was 51 percent, and 57 percent of adults were illiterate.

In an effort to address the connected problems of low access, quality, and efficiency in the Ivorian system, the government created the National Education and Training Development Plan in 1995, and adopted 2010 as the target date for Universal Primary Education. The Education and Training Support Project, which became effective in 1998 and is expected to run until 2002, is designed to assist the government's sectoral strategy in four main areas: improving learning outcomes, expanding access in under-served areas, building the ministry's institutional capacity, and enhancing sector planning and coordination. The first project component – improving learning outcomes – accounts for one third of the total project cost, and has five sub-components. One of these sub-components is expanding the demonstration schools, or *écoles témoins*, which were initiated under an earlier IDA-financed project, the Human Resources Development Management Support Project. Under the HRDMSP, sixty *écoles témoins* across ten regions proved successful in raising enrollments and improving learning outcomes through a combination of parent and community involvement in classroom and school management, in-service teacher training, and logistical support.

Under the Education and Training Support Project, a demonstration network of approximately 750 primary schools, and 180 secondary schools – *collèges témoins* – is being created. The initiative, which is managed by the directorate of primary and secondary schooling, is helping communities and teachers to focus systematically on the process of improving teaching and the general management of schools, and is intended to provide a sustainable model of school improvement, which will inform wider education reforms being undertaken in the sectoral strategy. At the school level, the teachers and community identify interventions, addressing issues such as repetition and dropout, the use of teaching materials, and community financial support for the school. Longitudinal studies on girls' performance will be undertaken in some of the *écoles témoins*, which should provide a clearer picture of the factors affecting girls' participation and achievement in primary schools. In addition, competitive school-based initiatives, which will receive $2.1m, and community level workshops will be financed by the project. Community participation will be facilitated through Local Management Committees, which are active in education in many rural communities, where they have taken on responsibility for the construction of primary classrooms.

The second major component of the project, expanding access in under-served areas, is also involving communities. The project aims to create an additional 40,000 school places by financing the construction of 900 classrooms, and the rehabilitation of a further 300. The project intends to provide a low-cost alternative to the current construction model, and will provide technical and supervisory support to communities building and rehabilitating their own classrooms.

Madagascar—Education Sector Development Project (CRESED II)

Madagascar experienced sharp economic decline during the 1970s and 1980s, which was reflected in falling living standards and deteriorating public services, including in education. After approaching UPE in 1980, enrollments fell and quality suffered, and between 1990 and 1995, the proportion of illiterate adults doubled. The highly centralized post-independence approach to education financing and delivery became increasingly inefficient and unwieldy, and effectively precluded any expansion of the system. In response, the government has started to recognize the need to work with a broader range of education stakeholders, including communities, to achieve its education objectives. CRESED II is intended to systematize and strengthen the role of communities and NGOs in education as part of a broad effort to strengthen Madagascar's human resource base. The project is being financed by a $65m credit, a projected contribution of $23m from communities, and through substantial additional financing from other donors.

The current project builds on the lessons learned during a previous pilot, which developed community participation in school rehabilitation and construction, and management and administration. Under CRESED I, two districts in one of Madagascar's six provinces initiated school-level projects under the *Programme de*

Renforcement et de l'Amélioration de la Gestion Administrative et Pédagogique (PRAGAP). Although the level of participation and ownership achieved under the project varied, and communities were reluctant to identify quality issues in their school plans, CRESED I nonetheless succeeded in markedly improving the physical condition of most of the schools it covered. It also generated significant enrollment increases, particularly in Grade 1. CRESED II is expanding the coverage of the approach piloted under PRAGAP to 4,100 schools, or approximately 30 percent of all primary schools in the country, in the poorest, rural areas. The project is intended to result in the construction of about 1,400 new classrooms, and the rehabilitation of over 8,000 classrooms, using a mix of modern and traditional materials and techniques.

CRESED II begins with an information campaign explaining the project to village communities where there is a public primary school. Where communities show an interest in participating, a contract is prepared which contains an analysis of community needs and priorities, and identifies education objectives, project costs and financing sources, an implementation timetable for the coming year, and the responsibilities of each partner. The contract is produced through a series of workshops bringing together teachers, parents, the wider community, and the local government authorities. The contract guarantees communities inputs they cannot provide themselves, such as imported building materials, and teachers, while communities are required to make a minimum contribution of 20 percent of total project costs. This includes in-kind contributions that are given a monetary value according to local market rates.

Project implementation is guided by the Project Implementation Manual, and is monitored through regular visits by local and regional authorities. The subdistrict primary education officer is required to visit each participating community at least four times a year, and produce an annual impact evaluation, which informs the preparation of the contract for the following year. In the first year of the project, contracts tend to focus on immediate needs, such as classroom rehabilitation and the deployment of enough staff to the school. The failure of many teachers to take up appointed posts in rural areas has led to a shortage in many schools, and has resulted in over 10 percent of teachers in Madagascar being hired locally and paid by rural communities in an effort to meet the shortfall. Where these issues are addressed, the communities' confidence in the program and willingness to contribute tends to increase. With the same objective, teacher quality is being addressed through several measures, including familiarizing teachers with the new curricula, training staff in new teaching methodologies and classroom time management and group work, introducing Malagasy as the medium of instruction in the early grades of primary school, and the use of tests to measure student progress and performance.

The second major dimension of CRESED II is the expansion of access to secondary education in underserved areas. Access to secondary education is a major factor in parents' willingness to enroll their children at the primary level, and the two project components are intended to create mutually reinforcing benefits. Access will be expanded by increasing class size from the current average of 30 students, by redeploying teachers, and by implementing school-based subprojects, similar to those being used at the primary level, in 45 secondary schools. This project component is expected to lead to the construction of over 180 classrooms, and the rehabilitation of a similar number, with specific investments identified in community plans.

Malawi—Primary Education Project

After Malawi's multiparty democratic elections in 1994, the government announced the introduction of fee-free primary education, to begin in October of the same year. The decision to abolish official user fees for primary schooling removed an important obstacle to education participation, and was enormously popular, leading to a dramatic increase in the number of enrollments, from 1.9 million to 3.2 million students. However, although the objective of expanding primary education access was consistent with the government's commitment to poverty reduction, the tight timetable led to major problems. In particular, the sudden abolition of fees posed a fiscal threat. The revenue from fees had been lost, and the expansion of the system was making major new budget demands. Public education expenditure reached 7.5 percent of GDP in the financial year 1994/95, over a period when the fiscal deficit tripled from 5 to 15 percent of GDP. The increase in education expenditure was largely the result of recruiting 20,000 new teachers at short notice to teach the massive influx of new students into the system. Despite these recruits, classrooms became severely overcrowded, with classes of 200 students being com-

mon, often being taught outdoors. As a result, quality suffered. The recruitment of 20,000 new teachers sharply squeezed non-salary recurrent expenditures, leaving most schools without adequate textbooks or other learning materials. Perhaps the most pressing concern raised by falling quality was that communities would become disillusioned with fee-free education, and withdraw their children from school.

In response, the Primary Education Project – intended to address urgent quality issues raised by the rapid enrollment increase – replaced the Third Education Sector Credit that had been under preparation when the abolition of primary education fees was announced. The project, which was fast-tracked in seven months from identification to approval by the board, was aimed at financing three year's of the government's education development plan. The project's three main components were classroom construction and rehabilitation, in-service teacher training, and provision of learning materials.

The bulk of the project finance was used to construct 1600 classrooms, spread between 1,000 existing schools and 75 new schools, which was complemented by approximately $1.6m in community in-kind and cash contributions. This provided places for 100,000 students, and represented an important start to efforts to construct the estimated 38,000 additional classrooms needed to reduce average class size to 60. Given the scale of the infrastructure needs facing the education system, simple and cost-effective construction methods were needed. The "shell concept," which had already been tested by UNICEF on a small scale, was identified as an effective approach to meeting the immediate need for classrooms. The design, which was completed by Malawi's Ministry of Works and Supplies in July 1995, uses a steel frame and sheet metal roof over a concrete floor, providing immediate shade, and shelter from rain. Private contractors, selected through a competitive bidding process, constructed the pavilions.

The construction approach drew heavily on community support. The community leveled and cleared each site, and molded hydraform bricks from a mix of cement, provided by the government, and earth, which was then used to fill in the frame. NGOs were contracted to mobilize the communities and facilitate participation. Orientation workshops for community leaders were held, with the aim of generating awareness and enthusiasm for the project, and ensuring that the buildings were maintained. Much of the information campaign was undertaken in conjunction with the First Malawi Social Action Fund, which constructed and rehabilitated over 21,000 classrooms, and the subsequent Second MASAF. The MASAF is a matching fund, operated on a 4:1 government-community ratio, with funds released in three tranches that are conditional on the progress that has been achieved in social infrastructure.

Both projects raised equity concerns, since some communities lacked the cohesion, skills, and confidence to respond to the incentives. The completion rate for the PEP has so far been approximately 50 percent; in those communities where the shells have not been filled in, learning materials and furniture are not secure. The unit costs of the shell approach are also high. Although the hydraform bricks provide strong and durable walls at relatively low cost, the cost of the frame means that the approach is not replicable on a large scale. Further implementation problems were encountered in some communities where PEP and MASAF have been poorly coordinated, with contradictory messages being communicated about what communities were expected to contribute to school construction and maintenance.

Mali—Improving Learning in Primary Schools

Mali faces some of the greatest educational challenges in Africa. Its primary gross enrollment ratio is 42 percent, and learning achievement, which was already low, has been falling in recent years. There are large disparities in access and attainment between rural and urban areas, and between boys and girls. Moreover, these poor results are generated by a system with some of the highest unit costs, as a proportion of GDP, in the region. Communities play a crucial role in education financing and delivery in Mali, through a range of different school models. In public schools, user fees and levies make an important contribution to the total cost of primary schooling. In addition, private schools, medersas, community-owned schools (often supported by international NGOs), and *pédagogie convergente* schools rely on private financing and management. *Pédagogie convergente* is a bilingual approach to schooling pioneered in Mali during the late 1980s, using an alternative curriculum and mother tongue instruction in the early grades. Operating mostly in rural areas, these schools have achieved significantly better learning outcomes than public schools that use

Table 1
World Bank education projects in Africa involving community support 1995–2000

Country and year	Project	Form of community support	Total cost (US$m)	Credit (US$m)	Coverage
Côte d'Ivoire 1998	Education and Training Support Project	Community involvement in classroom and school management	82.8	53.3	750 écoles témoins
Madagascar 1998	Education Sector Development Project (CRESED II)	Development of school plans, and cash and in-kind contributions	183.0	65.0	4100 primary schools; 40 lower 2ndary and 10 upper 2ndary schools
Malawi 1995	Primary Education Project	Community construction of classroom walls in school 'shells'	25.3	22.5	1600 classrooms in 75 new schools and 1000 existing schools
Mali 2000	Improving Learning in Primary Schools	Community school management, community support for bilingual education	5.5	3.8	700 primary schools
Mauritania 1995	General Education Project (Education V)	Matching grant for construction of new classrooms – cash and in-kind contributions given	42.6	35.0	64,000 additional school places, in 1,400 classrooms in 6 regions
Nigeria 2000	Self-help school project (part of Second Primary Education Project)	Matching grant for school rehabilitation —cash and in-kind contributions given by the community	30.8	25.5	900 primary schools, plus further support for 740 schools assisted under PEP 1
Rwanda 2000	Community-Based School Rehabilitation and Development Program (part of Human Resources Development Project)	School reconstruction and rehabilitation project —management; in-kind and cash inputs	37.07	35.0	60 commune level sub-projects
Tanzania 1997	Community Education Fund (part of Human Resources Development Program)	Matching grant to support school improvement plans developed by communities	24.0	20.9	16 districts 1600 primary schools
Zambia 2000	Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Program (phase one) 1999	Demand driven, community based school construction and rehabilitation— sub-component of BESSIP infrastructure development	340.0	40.0	2900 classrooms to be constructed over seven years

conventional teaching methods in French. In rural areas, especially where French is rarely used, *pédagogie convergente* has successfully narrowed the gap between school and community, and raised parental demand for education. These results have been achieved at markedly lower costs than in conventional schools.

The Improving Learning in Primary Schools project aims to systematize the *pédagogie convergente* model in 400 public primary schools, and maintain it in 300 schools where it is already being used as part of an effort to improve cost-effectiveness, and thereby expand access in Mali's primary education system. As well as introducing bilingual teaching, the *pédagogie convergente* schools will introduce widespread curriculum revisions. An important dimension of the project is testing how community-school partnerships can be

made more effective. In 30–40 selected communities where bilingual teaching has been introduced, school committees will develop improvement plans with the support of NGOs. The plans, which will be financed by the project, can include activities such as awareness raising among parents about the new curriculum and materials, providing administrative and financial training to committee members, establishing book management funds, and operating schemes, such as adult literacy classes, to encourage parents to support their children's reading and homework.

Broad community participation is a prerequisite of program success. One of the major challenges of the project will be effective sensitization that convinces parents and communities that *pédagogie convergente* is not a second-best model of schooling for children from poor households. A related project objective is a clear national policy on the curriculum and teaching approach, to avoid *pédagogie convergente* becoming an under-financed parallel system for poor communities, lacking academic recognition and effective links to the post-primary system. This is especially important given the planned decentralization program, which will transfer significant responsibility for education delivery to 700 *communes*.

The project fits within the broad priorities identified in the government of Mali's ten-year education sector development program, PRODEC. The government aims to reach 75 percent primary enrollment by 2008, and the expansion of bilingual education is a key element in the strategy to achieve this goal. A Bank credit to support PRODEC, the Education Sector Expenditure Program, will build on the community initiatives established under Improving Learning in Primary Schools. Reaching the government's enrollment target will require the renovation of 2000 classrooms, and the construction of a further 100 classrooms in each year of the ten-year program. School mapping exercises and community consultation will provide a basis for construction in the first phase of PRODEC. In the second and third phases, responsibility for construction will be devolved to communities, with oversight and supervision carried out by local government and NGOs, while maintenance capacity will be strengthened.

Mauritania—General Education Project (Education V)

Mauritania has achieved one of the most rapid expansions in primary education access in Africa, almost doubling the enrollment rate to roughly 90 percent over the 1990s. Much of this increase is attributable to communities that built their own schools in anticipation of government meeting the operating costs. Despite the progress made, substantial challenges remain. First, the urban population has swelled dramatically in recent years, largely because of desertification and the decline of pastoralism. Forty percent of Mauritanians now live in Nouakchott, the capital, placing pressure on inadequate basic services, including education. Second, education access is significantly lower than the national average in some of the poorest rural areas – in particular in East and Fleuve regions – where girls are at a distinct disadvantage. Third, quality and efficiency are low. Together with the heavy costs borne by communities, this raises questions about whether the current high levels of demand being shown by communities can be sustained, and whether UPE can be achieved.

The General Education Project is composed of several components intended to meet these challenges and support the government's objectives. In an effort to build on widespread community efforts in education, the community-based primary classroom construction program will expand access in the most educationally deprived areas by constructing 1,400 classrooms. In addition, the project covers the full cost of water and sanitation on each site. The project formally transfers responsibility for civil works from central government, to be shared by the communities and the *Agence Mauritanienne d'Exécution des Travaux d'Intérêt Public et de l'Emploi*, or AMEXTIPE. Construction is based on community management and cost-sharing – communities can either build the classrooms themselves, or contract out to local businesses after obtaining at least two quotations – and is governed by a project manual, which specifies design, implementation, and management arrangements. Payment of grants is made on a tranche basis, according to whether satisfactory progress has been made in line with project criteria, up to a limit of $10,000. The IDA credit finances 70 percent of the total classroom costs – up to $11.1m over the duration of the project – and the community finances 30 percent. There is no standard formula for how community resources are mobilized.

The project has successfully improved both access and the school environment. The contractual nature of the arrangements has established community confidence in the project, and has helped to build a strong

sense of ownership. Although the cost advantage over other construction approaches is not conclusive, early indications are that the cost of construction per classroom is 60–70 percent of other projects in the region. Less positively, maintenance of classrooms constructed through the project is an unresolved problem. Many communities are unwilling or unable to mobilize to repair and improve buildings. This is a particular problem in the poorest and least skilled communities, where initial construction work was often unsatisfactory. In these communities, the same factors that led to a weak initial response to the project are limiting its sustainability. Moreover, because many of these communities are remote, government support is often weak.

Nigeria—The Second Primary Education Project

After rapid educational expansion reached its peak in the early 1980s, Nigeria's education system entered an equally dramatic decline, as participation and standards plummeted. This continued into the 1990s, largely because of chronic under-funding. Per capita public education spending more than halved between 1994 and 1996, and now accounts for only 1 percent of GDP, less than one quarter of the regional average. Today, some 20 percent of primary-aged children are out of school, while almost one-third of those who enroll fail to complete the primary cycle. In 1999 the government responded to a worsening situation in the education sector by launching the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme, promising free and compulsory basic education through a range of formal and non-formal approaches. The Second Primary Education Project (PEP2) is designed to help prepare the groundwork for the UBE program, by piloting strategies for self-help community schools.

PEP2 has several components, including teacher training, provision of instructional materials, a new information system for the education sector, and an HIV-AIDS awareness program. The self-help component, costing $30.8m, is aimed at improving the learning environment in 900 schools, and providing further assistance, mostly in the form of classroom furniture, to 740 schools that had already benefited from support under the first Primary Education Project (PEP1). Under PEP1 school rehabilitation and construction had used conventional government contracting and procurement systems. However, costs had risen rapidly, preventing a substantial increase in school places. This led to proposals for an increased community role, and a number of self-help projects were subsequently supported under the credit. PEP2 aims to consolidate the development of more cost-effective methods of school rehabilitation and construction, by drawing on community support.

Although community participation is having a generally positive impact on schooling in Nigeria, many schools fail to receive the minimum inputs needed for learning to take place. In response, PEP 2 is making primary schools eligible for matching funds up to a value of 220,000 naira, with the community meeting not less than 20 percent of the total project costs. These funds are released in two installments, on the condition that adequate implementation has taken place. In an effort to ensure that poorer communities are not placed at a disadvantage, community contributions can be made in the form of labor or materials, which is then costed at the local market rate, as well as in cash.

In addition to mobilizing additional resources, the self-help project has two further objectives: to provide an alternative school development strategy to the dominant "top-down" approach used in Nigeria, and to increase the school's accountability to the community it serves by generating a sense of ownership. These objectives will be met through the ongoing community participation required in the project. The grants provided by the PEP support the implementation of school improvement plans developed by the community under the leadership of project implementation committees, whose members are elected. The involvement of community members in construction on designated "work days" and the contributions of skilled community members, such as carpenters and builders, are encouraged. While infrastructure is the most common priority of communities, other inputs are provided through the project, such as teacher support and the purchase of learning materials. Communities receive training and a project implementation manual providing detailed guidelines for implementation. Once the project's completion has been confirmed in a monitoring and evaluation report, the community receives a certificate of completion and – while remaining the owner of the project – formally hands over its work to the Local Government Education Authority, which acts as the handling agency.

Rwanda—The Human Resources Development Project

Rwanda's education system was devastated by the genocide of 1994. Primary gross enrollment halved, infrastructure was destroyed, and many trained teachers were killed or displaced. Although enrollments have largely recovered, the education system requires major improvements if Rwanda's development prospects are to improve. The Human Resources Development Project, of which the Community-based School Rehabilitation and Development Program (CSRDP) is a part, aims to address Rwanda's weak human resource base by expanding education access, improving quality, and building capacity. The CSRDP's main objective is to rehabilitate and construct schools with the full involvement of communities, in support of the Government of Rwanda's education strategy. This includes an ambitious primary enrollment target of 95 percent by 2010. Sixty CSRDP subprojects will be financed over the project's duration, at a cost of approximately $8 million, or 20 percent of total project cost.

The CSRDP will build on the experience of the Bank-financed Community Reintegration and Development Project, which worked with Community Development Committees (CDCs) to assist returnees and vulnerable groups in meeting basic needs and strengthened community capacity to implement small-scale development projects. A key lesson that emerged from earlier community-based development efforts in Rwanda was the importance of ownership to achieving sustainability. Taking this forward, the CSRDP will work in pre-identified communes in the most marginalized prefectures, where Community Development Plans will be developed using Participatory Rural Appraisals. Parents' Associations will play an important consultative role in producing the plans, identifying education needs and priorities, and rehabilitating and constructing classrooms. Community plans will be approved at the commune level against criteria in the Project Implementation Manual. Once approved, each sub-project is sent to the CDC for financing. Communities are required to contribute at least 10 percent, in cash or kind, to the total project cost. The CDCs will lead implementation of the project, with close support from the Ministry of Education at central, prefecture, and local levels. The CDC will elect a management and an administration subcommittee every two years over the project's six-year life span to administer the sub-projects, and will work closely with NGOs and other civil society organizations, particularly in sub-project design and monitoring and evaluation.

Tanzania—the Community Education Fund

Despite being one of the poorest countries in Africa, Tanzania achieved dramatic increases in primary school enrollment during the first two decades of independence, and perhaps achieved UPE in the mid-1970s. However, this progress was not sustained. Economic decline and public sector mismanagement contributed to a sharp decline in enrollments and quality. By the mid-1990s enrollments were below 80 percent and falling fast, and the system was failing to deliver functioning schools in many areas.

The Human Resources Development Project, or HRDP, is a pilot project financed by a $20.9m IDA credit intended to overcome some of the problems of access and quality that characterize the Tanzanian education system. It consists of two components: the Community Education Fund, or CEF, and a girls' scholarship program. The CEF is a matching fund program designed to increase the non-salary funding to primary schools in a way that improves the school environment, enrollment, and learning outcomes, and enhances accountability and participation at the community level. The project is running for five years with $5.1m from the credit, and a further $3m anticipated in community contributions, and now covers 1,600 schools across sixteen districts.

The starting point for implementation is a community meeting convened by the elected school committee, which identifies education needs and priorities in a rolling three-year plan. The plans can include both capital and non-salary recurrent expenditures, and usually identify school construction and rehabilitation, classroom furniture, and learning materials as key priorities. A consolidated cash contribution towards the community fund is agreed to, either on a household or per capita basis. Income from the school garden, local fundraising activities, and contributions from businesses can augment these funds. Once the community funds are deposited in a bank account, they are matched by a government grant, up to a ceiling of 6,000Tsh per pupil enrolled. The matching grant is provided on a sliding scale starting at 1:1, with poorer communities usually receiving grants at a 2:1 ratio. Communities that build classrooms, latrines, and other facilities receive technical assistance from district level

specialists, who ensure that minimum quality standards are met. District education officers are also required to make regular site visits to ensure that funds are being utilized responsibly, school plans are being updated, and that regular meetings are being held. Within the community, school accounts must be publicly displayed as a way of promoting accountability and further insuring against misuse of funds. In addition, twice-yearly meetings are held in the community to review progress against the school plan, and adjust it where necessary.

Box 7
Social funds and community participation in education

Social funds are human development projects that use demand-driven approaches to providing infrastructure in poor communities affected by economic crises. They are typically implemented by specially created agencies, which are autonomous of government and which disburse money directly to beneficiaries. Social funds were first supported by the World Bank in Latin America in the 1980s, but have spread rapidly in Africa during the past decade, with the total value of active lending for social fund projects in the region currently standing at $461m across ten countries. A substantial share of social funds—in most cases about 60 percent of funding for community development initiatives—is allocated to education, most of which is spent on school rehabilitation and construction at the primary and lower secondary levels.

The experience of social funds holds important lessons for wider education development efforts in Africa. First, social funds have created transparent and rapid financing mechanisms for disbursing money down to intended beneficiaries, in marked contrast to prevailing public finance systems in most African countries. Second, social funds have given local government and communities a greater say in how those resources are used than conventional delivery models, thereby encouraging local ownership and building capacity.

Social funds face a number of challenges. Many of these center on the tension between short- and long-term development goals. Social funds are intended to have an immediate impact, but have paid less attention to the recurrent cost implications of infrastructure development, and the ability and willingness of communities to maintain new facilities. At the same time, the parameters of participation tend to be decided outside the community, while the rapid entry of social funds into communities can often rush the mobilization process and limit the scope for genuine participation. Equity is also a concern, as many funds have sought rapid results by financing projects in the most accessible communities with the strongest organizational skills. Finally, social funds have generally neglected the education process, which requires more complex and sustained community involvement, and focused heavily on physical inputs.
(Frigenti and Harth 1998, Narayan and Ebbe 1997, Schmidt and Marc 1995).

The initial results of the CEF are generally positive. Per student non-salary spending has increased significantly in most CEF schools, and this has enabled many communities to dramatically improve the school environment, especially by making urgently needed improvements to classrooms. The transparent way in which funds are mobilized and used at the community level has had several beneficial effects. Many communities are feeling a renewed pride and interest in their schools, while in schools where theft of furniture and materials was previously widespread, community financing of new furniture has reduced the problem. Although there is insufficient data to draw firm conclusions, CEF schools also tend to show an improvement in the Primary School Leaving Examination when compared with other schools. One factor may be that teachers are more motivated in CEF schools, where the working environment has improved and staff are given an important role in identifying what should happen at the school level.

However, the benefits of the project have also been spread unevenly. Urban or "line of road" communities have benefited disproportionately from the CEF, while poorer communities in remote rural areas find it difficult to mobilize enough funds to implement the improvements urgently needed in their schools. These communities are visited less by education officials than those close to district centers, and often find it difficult to reach the nearest bank to deposit their funds. In some communities no funds have been mobilized, while in others, the sums raised have been small, and well below the targets set. This threatens to cause disequilibrium in access and quality in a situation where public spending on education is already skewed towards the higher income quintiles.

Zambia—The Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Program

During the 1980s, and much of the 1990s, Zambia experienced one of the sharpest economic downturns in Africa. Having been one of the wealthiest countries in the region in 1970, by the late 1990s almost 70 percent of Zambians were living below the poverty line, and approximately half of all Zambians were "core

poor," unable to meet even their basic nutritional needs. At the same time, Zambia has suffered one of the most severe AIDS epidemics in Africa. The education system has deteriorated rapidly because of the social and economic crisis that has engulfed the country. Enrollments fell sharply after 1980, and only two-thirds of school age children in Zambia are currently enrolled. Many schools are dilapidated and under-resourced, and learning outcomes are poor.

The government of Zambia's 1996 National Policy on Education identified the key problems faced by the education sector, established targets for 2005 and 2015, and provided a strategy for attaining them. Basic education, covering the first nine years of schooling, was identified as the initial priority. The Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Program (BESSIP) is the national program for achieving the goals laid out in the National Policy, and has two key targets: achieve UPE by 2005, and improve learning outcomes. Bilateral and multilateral donor support accounts for 52 percent of the total cost of the program up to 2001, and IDA is part-financing BESSIP with two phased Adaptable Program Loans (APLs), the first of which is $40m over two years. Under the first APL phase, five key areas will be financed: activities to promote teaching and learning readiness; primary schools infrastructure; teacher training; curriculum development; and sector administration.

The school infrastructure component of BESSIP accounts for 65 percent of program costs up to 2001, and $14.3m of the IDA loan will finance community-based, demand-driven education infrastructure to replace community constructed "pole and mud" structures – which in 1996 accounted for one third of school buildings – with more permanent classrooms. An estimated 7,000 additional classrooms will be needed over the duration of the program, of which 40 percent are expected to be built using demand-driven community-based construction. During the first phase of IDA assistance, 3,000 classrooms will be built, and a further 1,600 will be rehabilitated. The implementing agency for the infrastructure component of the BESSIP is the Micro-Projects Unit (MPU), based in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. Most of the construction will use the community approach developed by the MPU, although a small number of classrooms will be contractor built, in the poorest and most remote areas where construction would not otherwise take place.

The MPU is responsible for most of the community-supported school construction that has taken place in Zambia in recent years, receiving financing from the World Bank, the EU, and bilateral donors. It was created during the first IDA-financed social recovery project, from 1991 to 1995. School construction and rehabilitation were a major component of Social Recovery 1, which developed participatory identification, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation approaches. Under the Second Social Recovery Project, which was effective from 1995 to 2000, there were increased use of participatory approaches, and a newly formed independent agency – the Participatory Assessment Group (PAG) – was formed. The PAG is responsible for conducting regular site visits to communities, undertaking beneficiary assessments, and providing training in participatory techniques at the district level.

The Social Recovery projects proved to be successful in building capacity and accountability at the community level, and were more cost-effective than other construction approaches. Whereas the average cost of a conventional, centrally contracted primary school in Zambia is $75,000, the community-based approach is costing only $28,000, or 36 percent of the cost of the conventional model. Under the Social Recovery Projects, the community provided inputs at each stage of the project. Once a project was identified, a project committee was formed at the community level, which was responsible for signing the legally binding financial agreement with the MPU. A separate bank account was then created, and a launch workshop held at the site. The community was then required to contribute to implementation, usually in a combination of cash and in-kind inputs, which was then matched by government grants. The MPU is also the implementing agency for the Zambia Social Investment Fund, or ZAMSIF, which builds on the experience of the two social recovery projects. This is a two-phase project, running for ten years from 2000, which is supporting improved access to social services in the context of the ongoing decentralization process. It is being financed by a $64.7m loan, 60 percent of which is being disbursed to micro-projects through the Community Improvement Fund. As with the Social Recovery Projects, community-based school rehabilitation and construction is an important part of the micro-project activities, and construction under the ZAMSIF is being coordinated with the BESSIP infrastructure component by the MPU.

6

Key Lessons for the Africa Region of the World Bank

Over the past decade, there has been a growing recognition that education development in Africa must be a joint endeavor of governments, communities, civil society, and donors. This stems from the widespread disappointment with the slow rate of progress under traditional models of education delivery, and has been driven both by pragmatism and principle. Deteriorating education systems receiving low levels of public subsidy have depended increasingly on private financing, and community financing in particular, for a growing share of recurrent and capital expenditures. This process has been driven more by default than design, and raises serious equity and efficiency concerns. At the same time, many African countries have committed to new ways of working, which bring communities and governments together as collaborative partners, each with distinct roles and responsibilities. In many countries, this commitment is reflected in innovative efforts to improve education access and quality by making communities key participants in the running of their schools. A significant and growing number of these policy experiments in Sub-Saharan Africa—identified in the previous section—have been supported or initiated by the World Bank. Two key questions should be asked about this body of experience. First, to what extent has the Bank successfully helped governments to develop viable community approaches to education development? And second, what changes are needed for the Bank's support for community based education to be made more effective?

As the summaries in the previous section demonstrate, several Bank-supported programs and projects in Africa are generating promising results by working with communities. Although robust data is often lacking, and many of the projects reviewed in the previous section are too new to provide clear progress indicators, many interventions have clearly improved the physical environment of schools, enhanced education access and quality, and contributed to wider economic and social development goals. Effective budget mechanisms, allowing resources to flow quickly and transparently from central government to intended beneficiaries, have been established in several projects, and communities have been given a greater say in how these resources are used. Projects have also generated benefits that, although not easy to measure, may still be real, such as a renewed pride and interest among communities in their schools. But some of the impact identified in project reviews and evaluations is unremarkable. For example, enrollments can be expected to rise in projects that are extending education provision to previously under-served areas. Other evidence is inconclusive, such as where improved enrollment and attendance in project schools reflects children being moved from schools with fewer resources not covered by the project. It is also difficult to isolate the impact of community support on education outcomes from the influence of better funding, more regular site visits to schools, in-service teacher training, or any other project-financed input. In short, the current community-based education projects supported by the World Bank raise questions that require further analysis.

Many of these questions could be better answered by strengthening the analytical foundations of the projects supported by the Bank. Often, the rationale

Table 2
Forms of community support in World Bank community education projects

for drawing on community support is unclear in project design, particularly on the critical question of whether community support is a financial expedient, or is inherently beneficial to the education process. In other cases, there is no obvious causal link between the inputs being provided by a project and the expected outcomes (for example, projects restricted to infrastructure that establish progress indicators for learning outcomes). Demand-driven processes are sometimes ill-defined in project designs, and shared educational needs and goals – and the ability of communities to collectively identify these – are often assumed, thereby increasing the risk that equity objectives will be jeopardized. As a start, future projects must make a greater effort to return to principles, and be explicit about where community support begins and ends, and what it is expected to achieve.

The narrow focus of the projects in Section 5 further limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the Bank's portfolio about what works and what does not in community-based education. As Table 2 shows, the projects share many common features. Most restrict community participation to cash and in-kind contributions to a matching fund, which is then used to meet a prescribed set of needs, identified by the government and the Bank in a project manual. Permitted expenditures in many project designs cover a wide range of capital and non-salary recurrent expenditures. In practice, however, the projects reviewed in Section 5 are largely confined to school rehabilitation and reconstruction. Although this often addresses an urgently felt need on the part of communities and teachers, and can help to secure ongoing support for the school, experience from both the CEF in Tanzania and CRESED I in Madagascar shows that community interest tends to diminish once these needs have been met. School management is usually restricted to allocative decisions about the additional funding provided through the project, and decision-making forums usually have few formal responsibilities – and little reason to exist – once project funding stops flowing. As Table 2 shows, there is little experience in Bank-supported projects of community involvement in the qualitative dimensions of the education process, such as efforts to improve student and teacher attendance and performance. Decision-making related to these areas – for example concerning teacher recruitment, or the shape of the school day and year – continues to be treated as the exclusive responsibility of the education ministry in most projects.

As a growing number of African countries decentralize to the local level, and devolve new education responsibilities to communities, the Bank must be prepared to provide both the analytical and the financial support needed to ensure that these policy developments are implemented in an efficient, equitable, and sustainable way. For this to happen, it needs not only to distill and internalize its own experience of community-based education, but also learn from the experiences of governments, donors, NGOs, and communities. For this to happen, a participatory approach to project development needs to be adopted, involving intended beneficiaries closely in preparation, and giving communities a greater say in the parameters of

their support. This requires changes within the World Bank. As the Sector Assistance Strategy for the Africa Region notes, the Bank needs to become more open to new ideas, more willing to take risks, and make learning by doing more integral to its way of working.

A stronger emphasis on participation

A stronger emphasis on participation can be expected to improve the quality and sustainability of Bank-financed projects.[1] Achieving this will require changes in the approaches the Bank supports, including a widespread use of new, flexible lending instruments that accommodate "learning by doing" and can be adjusted to the different needs and time frames of heterogeneous communities. Both the Adaptable Program Loan (APL) – designed to support long-term, sector-wide education development through a series of different investments (such as the BESSIP in Zambia) – and the Learning and Innovation Loan (LIL), used for the Improving Learning in Primary Schools project in Mali, have the potential for assisting country efforts to develop community-based approaches.

In many cases, other fundamental changes in the way community support is conceptualized and enlisted will be necessary. At present, most of the Bank-financed education projects in Africa draw on community support primarily as a source of funding in poor and educationally neglected communities. Although financial contributions to education have the potential to enhance ownership, and create pressure for local accountability, this relationship cannot be assumed as it sometimes is in project designs. There is a risk that communities may feel exploited and disempowered, especially where the project is designed and initiated by external stakeholders, or where wealthier, urban communities are not expected to make comparable contributions to the cost of education. Although matching grant projects can provide a solid foundation for community–government partnership, their success or failure depends on the level of community cohesion, the extent to which projects address felt needs, the balance of costs and benefits, and the quality and amount of complementary support provided to help weaker communities mobilize.

Although many of the projects reviewed in the previous section have only recently become effective, experience suggests that the Bank has often not paid enough attention to participatory issues, both at the design and implementation stages. Limited use has been made of participatory techniques, and communities have typically been given little say in whether they are involved in the project, or in the nature of the support they are expected to provide. In particular, the "cascade" approach to community mobilization, which is common in Bank-financed projects, is a key factor in the uneven response to many Bank-financed interventions. The cascade approach tends to treat Information and Education Campaigns (IEC) as an event preceding implementation, rather than part of a process of empowerment used to encourage communities to identify their education needs, priorities, and responsibilities. Cascade approaches can also weaken the project focus, since project information tends to be filtered as it is transmitted downward to the community level through the educational hierarchy. At the same time, using hierarchies of educational professionals and community leaders to transmit information serves to reinforce the power of these groups over the project. This increases the likelihood of the project being presented to the community as a directive by teachers and leaders, of matching fund contributions being understood as an extension of cost-recovery policies, and of guidelines being read as conditions. In these circumstances, project implementation is unlikely to be truly participatory, and the risk of elite capture is high.

A commitment to equity

In many cases, the support provided through projects to help weaker communities to mobilize has not only lacked a participatory focus, but has also been insufficient. In some cases, this has contributed to the weak responses of the poorest communities to project incentives. Although the capacity to adopt an expanded role in education varies widely, it is rare for the most remote and poor communities to be targeted for the additional investments required to build confidence and skills. This process of building capacity can take considerable time, and requires flexibility and sensitivity from other stakeholders, especially in vulnerable communities scarred by conflict, or severely affected by HIV-AIDS. In particular, targeting poor communities for additional assistance places heavy demands

1 An OED overview of Africa Region projects between 1994 and 1997 found that 75 percent of projects with some level of community participation were rated satisfactory, against 60 percent for other projects.

on local government officials, such as district education officers, whom Bank-financed projects tend to rely on for leading and monitoring implementation at the local level. Yet projects often underestimate the training and support needed to enable local education officials to fulfill a facilitating role in communities, which is far removed from traditional ways of working in most African bureaucracies. Because of poor physical and communications infrastructure in rural areas, projects also often need to pay greater attention to the practical difficulties local government officials face in visiting remote communities on a regular basis. Again, unless the additional costs of reaching under-served rural areas are factored into project designs, educational inequalities between upper and lower income groups are likely to widen, and projects will fail to address educational needs where they are urgent.

These risks can be minimized through a constant emphasis in project design and implementation on the Bank's official equity commitment, that no child should be excluded from school because of an inability to pay. Although this is a commitment shared by most African governments in their own policy statements, equity objectives in projects are sometimes ill-defined. This partly reflects a lack of data, which makes it difficult to identify and address poverty-related barriers to enrollment and attendance accurately. However, weak project preparation also threatens equity objectives. For example, anticipated community contributions under matching grant arrangements are often based on assumptions, derived from surveys asking households hypothetical questions about the level of educational contribution they are willing to pay. Yet, such surveys rarely provide consistent answers, and are difficult to interpret (Penrose 1997). In other cases, estimates of what communities can afford to contribute to education are justified based on anecdotal reports of spending by poor households on non-essentials. Equity risks also arise where there is no effective coordination between the creation of cost-sharing policies in education and in other sectors.

Equity risks also arise from the Bank's current project focus on matching funds for education infrastructure in poor and under-served areas, which threatens to have a strongly regressive effect on public spending. The Bank's stated commitment is to target scarce public subsidy to those areas where unmet education needs are greatest. Yet, existing matching grant projects typically place additional demands, in terms of time, energy and cash, on poor communities, while commensurate demands are not being placed on urban populations, who already capture a disproportionate share of public spending on education. Allied to this, much stronger analytical linkages need to be established in the Bank's work between cost-sharing and broader education finance issues. Because, as was noted in Section 4, most cost sharing addresses residual financing needs; it is unlikely to dramatically improve the efficiency of education systems, and risks having the opposite effect. Thus, cost sharing can only be effective if it is carried out as part of a fundamental review of education costs. In many countries, such a review would have to address issues such as teacher training and deployment, the structure of the curriculum, and procurement policies. Unless a thorough review of the cost structure of the education system shows that, after efficiency savings, further private education charges are essential for the effective operation of schools, and cannot be met through tax revenue, there is no clear justification for placing additional financial demands on households.

Shifting the focus of community support for education

These equity concerns do not imply that communities should not play a central role in education development. However, the prevailing model of community support, which places additional demands on usually poor and rural communities—often without giving them a meaningful say in their level of participation or in how resources are used—needs to be replaced by a more equitable and participatory approach. Governments must provide the core public funding required for primary schools to function effectively, and communities should be encouraged to make qualitative contributions to education through a greater say in school management and active involvement in the instructional cycle. This is desirable for two key reasons. First, shifting the focus of community support away from cost sharing to issues related more closely to the education *process* has the potential to address many of the underlying demand-side constraints to enrollment and attendance. Demand-side constraints have traditionally been neglected in Bank-financed projects, and in education strategies in Africa more generally, despite the evidence that low quality and a lack of accountability are key factors in stagnant and falling enrollments in many

African countries (e.g., Bredie and Beeharry 1998). Where enough physical inputs are provided, giving communities a meaningful say in the day-to-day running of their schools can transform school–community relations, and help to improve learning outcomes. Second, involvement in school management may carry fewer equity risks than an expanded community financing role, especially where it is developed in conjunction with capacity building efforts in central and local government. Community support for school management and the instructional cycle is also easier to sustain on a voluntary basis than are financial contributions, and offers community members the choice of varying levels of involvement and participation.

Empowering communities to play a stronger qualitative role in education can only succeed where all education stakeholders recognize and support the principle and practice of community participation. In many countries, this will require root and branch reforms that devolve considerable planning and resource allocation powers to local government and the community level. Otherwise, bottom-up approaches developed at the community level are likely to be contradicted and stymied by the highly centralized, top-down service delivery model found in most African countries. Policy options that could be considered include community involvement in the hiring and firing of teachers, selection of textbooks at the local level from approved lists, community preparation of rolling school plans, and the use of educated community members as teaching assistants in classrooms. Not all these policy options will be appropriate in every case, and each involves equity, efficiency, and quality risks, many of which were identified earlier in the paper. For communities to fulfill these sorts of new roles, strong horizontal and vertical linkages need to be established between and among different stakeholder groups, and especially in government.

There are often political obstacles to these changes taking place, even where they are theoretically desirable: any fundamental redistribution of power or change in the direction of accountability is contentious as well as technically difficult, and can only be developed gradually. For its part, the Bank needs to be clear and consistent in its support of government efforts to decentralize, and adopt realistic time frames for local government reform programs. Decentralization will not work if it seeks to bypass inefficient and corrupt government, or is an abdication of responsibility by central government for basic social service delivery.

Mainstreaming best practice

These systemic changes can only happen if cost-effective and replicable community approaches that safeguard equity and quality objectives are identified. Although it is not a problem confined to the education sector, or to projects supported by the World Bank, many of the projects reviewed in the previous section pay insufficient attention to replicability, and tend to operate as costly enclaves of innovation in otherwise unreformed and inefficient systems. Although many Bank-supported projects have generated positive results in terms of access and learning outcomes, this is partly to be expected, since community education components are usually labor-intensive and small-scale, and channel significant additional capital and non-salary recurrent expenditure to the school level. What is rarely analyzed in project evaluations is whether the same results could have been achieved at a lower cost, or whether taking it to scale would be financially sustainable. A further limitation on the effectiveness of many projects is the weak coordination of Bank-financed interventions with other community-based projects. This increases the risk of overlap and duplication. As a result, communities often receive contradictory messages and face competing sets of incentives—for example where one project is advocating community led construction, and another is providing centrally contracted infrastructure—thereby blunting project effectiveness and distorting results.

Although "mainstreaming" or systematizing key lessons and experiences from projects is usually a stated objective, it is unusual for project documents to suggest how this should be done, and whatever effective mainstreaming takes place is often driven more by personalities than by systems. The often rapid dissipation of project benefits once mainstreaming has occurred reflects the weak country ownership of many pilot projects, and the need for governments to take a genuine lead in identifying sectoral needs and priorities. At present, community based education projects often reflect the priorities of Bank staff, rather than those of the ministry, and are developed with only limited consultation. Ownership and sustainability can be further undermined by the use of Project Implementation Units (PIUs) within government ministries. Although PIUs have the advantage of insulating projects from bureaucratic inefficiencies, this is also their greatest weakness, since they isolate projects from the ministry, and therefore reduce the likelihood

of community-based approaches having an "institutional champion" once mainstreamed.

It is clear that unless governments and teachers recognize the need to share power with communities, and projects address felt needs and build skills and confidence among all education stakeholders, long-term sustainable changes in attitudes and practice are unlikely to happen. Thus, institution building needs to become an integral part of Bank-financed efforts to build community support for education. Ultimately, community support for education is not a discrete development issue that can be approached in isolation through narrowly focused projects. Instead, it needs to be developed as part of systemic reforms aimed at making education systems, and the societies of which they are a part, more democratic, open, and accountable.

Summary conclusions

- Education is always a joint endeavor, and education development cannot take place in Africa except through education partnerships between governments and communities. At the same time, because of communities' heterogeneity, there is no blueprint for participation.
- Community financing cannot be expected to substitute for the core funding needed to create the basic conditions for learning in every school. Education partnerships are most likely to succeed where equitable funding is provided for all primary schools, and greater authority is devolved to the local level to allocate these resources and participate in school management.
- Effective decentralization to the community level will require fundamental changes in the cost structure of education, and changes in budget procedures that allow resources to flow rapidly and efficiently from the center to the school level.
- The World Bank has a critical role in assisting African country efforts to develop viable community-based approaches that safeguard equity, promote quality and efficiency, and fit coherently within wider governance structures. To perform this role, the Bank needs to broaden its project focus, and place a greater emphasis on project participation, cost-effectiveness, and replicability.

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